United Nations A/70/PV.83

General Assembly
Seventieth session

Official Records

83rd plenary meeting
Friday, 22 January 2016, 10 a.m.
New York

President: Mr. Lykketoft . . . . (Denmark)

In the absence of the President, Mr. Alyemany (Yemen), Vice-President, took the Chair.

The meeting was called to order at 10.05 a.m.

Agenda item 138 (*continued*)

Scale of assessments for the apportionment of the expenses of the United Nations (A/70/722)

The Acting President: In keeping with established practice, I should like to draw the attention of the General Assembly to document A/70/722, in which the Secretary-General informs the President of the General Assembly that 15 Member States are in arrears in the payment of their financial contributions to the United Nations within the terms of Article 19 of the Charter.

I would like to remind delegations that, under Article 19 of the Charter,

> "A Member of the United Nations which is in arrears in the payment of its financial contributions to the Organization shall have no vote in the General Assembly if the amount of its arrears equals or exceeds the amount of the contributions due from it for the preceding two full years".

May I therefore take it that the General Assembly takes note of the information contained in document A/70/722?

It was so decided.

Agenda item 33

The role of diamonds in fuelling conflict

Note verbale dated 2 December 2015 from the Permanent Mission of Angola to the United Nations addressed to the Secretary-General, transmitting the report of the Kimberley Process Certification Scheme (A/70/596)

Draft resolution (A/70/L.40)

The Acting President: I now give the floor to the representative of Angola to introduce draft resolution A/70/L.40.

Mr. Campos (Angola) (*spoke in Portuguese; English text provided by the delegation*): At the outset, I would like to express Angola's gratitude to you, Sir, for convening this plenary meeting to consider agenda item 33, "The role of diamonds in fuelling conflict". It is indeed a great honour for me to address the General Assembly today and to reaffirm my country's commitment to the Kimberley Process Certification Scheme.

In 2003 in Kimberley, South Africa, the international community took action to curb the trade in conflict diamonds by establishing a unique international scheme bringing together Governments, the diamond industry and civil society. Those actions culminated in the establishment of the Kimberley Process, which Angola has supported since its creation. The Kimberley Process is a unique multi-stakeholder approach in which Governments, the diamond industry

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and civil society work together to monitor and control the rough diamond trade, and which is now a model for other efforts to combat natural-resource-based conflict. The Kimberley Process demonstrates that, when Governments work together with the private sector and civil-society organizations, they can ensure that the legitimate trade in diamonds helps countries reduce poverty, promote transparency and economic development, combat smuggling and money laundering, and meet the Sustainable Development Goals.

The date of 31 December 2015 marks the end of Angola's term as Chair of the Kimberley Process Certification Scheme. We are pleased to hand over the chairmanship of the Kimberley Process Certification Scheme to the United Arab Emirates. Angola also welcomes the Commonwealth of Australia as Vice-Chair for 2016.

Pursuant to resolution 69/136, I wish to present to the General Assembly the report on the implementation of the Kimberley Process (A/70/596, annex) and, in my capacity as Chair for 2015, to also introduce draft resolution A/70/L.40, entitled "The role of diamonds in fuelling conflict: breaking the link between the illicit transaction of rough diamonds and armed conflict as a contribution to prevention and settlement of conflicts".

The report and the draft resolution to be adopted today reflect the substantial progress and momentum this important Process achieved during 2015. The draft resolution addresses the need to break the link between the illicit trade in rough diamonds and armed conflict as a contribution to the prevention and settlement of conflicts. The contribution of the Kimberley Process is fundamental in that regard and is therefore deserving of the full support of the General Assembly. Angola is pleased to report that the Kimberley Process is effectively responding to the mandate it was given by the General Assembly to combat the role of diamonds in fuelling armed conflict.

The draft resolution reflects the work done to date, and I am very grateful for the support it has received. The sponsors of the draft resolution are Argentina, Australia, Austria, Belgium, Brazil, Bulgaria, Croatia, Cyprus, the Czech Republic, Denmark, Estonia, Finland, France, Germany, Greece, Hungary, Ireland, Israel, Italy, Japan, Latvia, Lithuania, Luxembourg, Malta, the Netherlands, Poland, Portugal, Romania, Singapore, Slovakia, Slovenia, Spain, Sweden and the United Kingdom of Great Britain and Northern Ireland. We hope that the General Assembly will adopt the draft resolution by acclamation today, as it has in previous years.

The draft resolution contained in document A/70/L.40 is based on the previous resolution 69/136 and on the final communiqué adopted by all members by consensus at the plenary meeting of the Kimberley Process, which took place in Luanda, Angola, on 20 November 2015. The draft resolution before us represents the outcome of the negotiations and compromise reached during informal consultations. The relevant points of the draft resolution are as follows.

It welcomes the proposals for an international certification scheme for rough diamonds developed in the Kimberley Process, which provide a good basis for the international diamond-control mechanism that we all envision. It recognizes that the proposed international certification scheme could help ensure the effective implementation of the relevant Security Council resolutions containing sanctions on the trade in conflict diamonds. It increases the transparency and accuracy of statistics. It promotes prerequisites for cross-border Internet sales. It promotes inclusiveness by broadening the level of involvement by Governments, regional organizations, the diamond industry and civil society in the Kimberley Process. It expresses appreciation to Swaziland, the European Union, the United Arab Emirates, Mexico, Armenia and the Republic of the Congo for having received review visits in 2015. Furthermore, it welcomes the commitment of those countries to continuously opening their certification system for reviews and improvements, and calls upon all participants to invite and receive review visits, in accordance with the peer review system of the Kimberley Process.

It expresses appreciation for the fact that a review visit was conducted in Côte d'Ivoire, as per Security Council resolution 2153 (2014). It encourages the Friends of the Mano River Union to continue providing support to Côte d'Ivoire, Liberia, Guinea and Sierra Leone for the implementation of the Kimberley Process Certification Scheme, as well as for its continued participation in regional cooperation and law-enforcement activities. Lastly, it takes note of the measures adopted by the Central African Republic's authorities and follow-up committee and the Kimberly Process monitoring team, which are consistent with the terms of reference of the team to implement the administrative decision on the resumption of exports of rough diamonds from the Central African Republic, as approved through a written procedure on 17 July 2015.

In recent years, the Kimberley Process has made significant strides in the fulfilment of its mandate. However, it still faces several challenges. In that regard, the ongoing efforts of Governments, the diamond industry and civil society are necessary to maintain and improve the internal control mechanisms of all participating countries and strengthen the system to eliminate the flow of illicit rough diamonds in the international market.

As far as the election of the Chair and Vice-Chair is concerned, the plenary meeting of the Kimberley Process in Luanda has enabled us to continue to improve the rules and procedures in order to reach a consensual position on the matter. Having said that, the plenary has elected the United Arab Emirates as Chair and the Commonwealth of Australia as Vice-Chair of the Kimberley Process for 2016.

Moreover, following the lifting of the embargo by Security Council resolution 2153 (2014), a group of the monitoring team, represented by several member countries and led by the Republic of Angola, conducted a review visit to the Republic of Côte d'Ivoire. The results of the visit were positive, thus enabling the country to resume the export of its rough diamonds. Also, it is pertinent to emphasize that the review mission that took place in the Central African Republic, and that was conducted by the Kimberley Process participants and observers and led by Angola, has enabled the resumption of rough-diamond exports from the compliance zones through an administrative decision adopted in July 2015. The two steps just mentioned represent tremendous progress and prove the essence of the Kimberley Process, which is to allow the marketing of diamonds exploited legally under the auspices of legitimate Governments, and prevent the introduction of diamonds mined by rebels into the international market.

As representatives may be aware, the Kimberley Process remains open, global and non-discriminatory to all countries and regional economic integration organizations willing and able to fulfil its requirements. In that regard, countries continue to apply to and join the Kimberley Process. During the past year, we received requests from Mozambique, Gabon and Liechtenstein. Furthermore, the Kimberley Process has made special efforts to fully reintegrate the Bolivarian Republic of Venezuela, which will receive a review mission in the first quarter of 2016. It is the desire of the Kimberley Process to see the widest possible participation. To that end, it continues to engage and encourage countries to join and be integrated in the Process.

Finally, I wish to thank all representatives again for contributing to the discussions and supporting the draft resolution, and I ask the Assembly to take note of the annual report on the Kimberley Process Certification Scheme, as well as to adopt the proposed draft resolution. I also wish to express my sincere gratitude to all participants, in particular the Chairs of the working groups and committees of the Kimberly Process, for the support they have given to Angola during its chairmanship of the Process. I trust that the incoming Chair and Vice-Chair will enjoy the same support.

Angola looks forward to working with the 2016 Chair, as well as with all Kimberley Process participants and observers, in promoting greater cooperation within the Organization.

The Acting President: I give the floor to the observer of the European Union.

Mr. Parenti (European Union): I have the honour to speak on behalf of the European Union (EU). The European Union and its member States, which act as a single participant in the Kimberley Process Certification Scheme, would like in the first place to commend the Republic of Angola for its successful chairmanship of the Kimberly Process, and to welcome the results that have been achieved insofar as they illustrate the important efforts deployed to continue strengthening the Kimberley Process and to confront the challenges of the future.

As Chair of the Kimberley Process Working Group on Monitoring, the European Union has actively contributed to strengthening the implementation of the Kimberley Process Certification Scheme and encourages participants to continue committing themselves to enhanced scrutiny through Kimberley Process peer review visits, as well as to substantive annual reports. The EU would in particular like to express appreciation to Swaziland, the United Arab Emirates, Mexico, Armenia and the Republic of the Congo for having hosted review visits in 2015 and to the Democratic Republic of the Congo, Lesotho, Sierra Leone, Norway, Togo, Cameroon, Panama and Ghana, as well as Belarus and Brazil, the Lao People's

Democratic Republic, Mauritius and Venezuela, for having invited review visits in 2016, noting that the administrative decision on peer review calls for all Kimberley Process participants to host a review visit every three years.

We firmly believe that the consistent use of those implementation tools will strengthen the ability of the Kimberley Process to tackle illicit trade in conflict diamonds and call on all participants to step up efforts in that respect. The EU welcomes the commitment of the Process participants and observers to considering relevant recommendations of the Financial Action Task Force report related to risks in the diamond-supply chain and engaging directly with the authors of the report in the context of ongoing efforts to further strengthen the implementation of the Certification Scheme.

The EU welcomes the efforts of the Central African Republic to further implement its work plan and road map for strengthening the internal control system. The EU takes note of the steps taken by the Central African Republic's Follow-Up Committee and the Kimberley Process Monitoring Team, consistent with the Team's terms of reference for implementing the administrative decision on resumption of exports of rough diamonds from the Central African Republic, as approved through written procedure on 17 July 2015. The EU also welcomes the Central African Republic's Process authorities' commitment to continuing to implement the administrative decision and share any relevant information and data with the Kimberley Process Monitoring Team, as well as to hosting a field mission to diamond-producing areas as soon as possible in order for the Process to verify the situation on the ground, with a view to validating the country's proposal for determining compliant zones from which the export of rough diamonds could resume.

Furthermore, the European Union welcomes the recent steps taken by the Mano River Union (MRU) countries — Côte d'Ivoire, Guinea, Liberia and Sierra Leone — to create a new impetus for further regional cooperation in compliance with the Kimberley Process Certification Scheme, an initiative highlighted by the Security Council in resolution 2153 (2014), which lifted the embargo on the export of rough diamonds from Côte d'Ivoire. The European Union especially welcomes the continuous support for the MRU countries provided by the technical team of the Working Group on Monitoring and for the Friends of the MRU group, in particular the ongoing efforts undertaken to formalize the role of the MRU secretariat and involve other implementing partners and technical assistance providers.

In 2015, the international community demonstrated its determination to act collectively and constructively through the Kimberley Process as a valuable instrument for preventing diamonds from fuelling conflicts and for ultimately contributing to economic and social development, particularly in developing countries. In that context, the EU welcomes the commitment of the Process to implementing the Washington Declaration on integrating development and artisanal and small-scale diamond mining in the Kimberley Process.

The EU welcomes the fact that in recent years the Kimberley Process Certification Scheme has successfully succeeded in assisting Governments in responding to new situations of conflict and violence. We strongly support the efforts of the Kimberley Process to evolve and adapt in order to meet future challenges in the global diamond-supply chain and provide assurance to consumers that diamonds are not tainted by violence.

Before I conclude, I would like to stress that one of the unique features of the Kimberley Process is its tripartite structure. Both industry and civil society are essential elements of the Kimberley Process and have contributed much to its establishment and operations. In this respect, the European Union calls on all participants and observers to recognize the full diversity of opinions within the Kimberley Process and continue working together to further enhance the scheme's credibility. In particular, we rely on a close working relationship with all our partners in the civil society coalition to ensure that the Kimberley Process remains an effective tool for peacebuilding and conflict prevention, to monitor the efficacy of the Kimberley Process in diamond-mining communities across the globe and to continue to challenge us to do more and do better. We will continue to rely on that relationship to ensure the Process remains an effective tool in the future.

The European Union would like to again express its gratitude to the Republic of Angola for its stewardship of the Process this year. We now welcome the United Arab Emirates as the incoming Kimberley Process Chair and express gratitude for its vision as the 2016 Chair to further strengthen the implementation of the Certification Scheme and to ensure that the trade in rough diamonds is used for the benefit of all people.

We welcome and support the commitments that the United Arab Emirates has made for its chairmanship, and we would encourage the country to further engage with the Civil Society Coalition in order to further strengthen the Kimberley Process, including in the areas of valuation and enforcement cooperation. The European Union looks forward to working closely with the United Arab Emirates to bring renewed impetus and strength to the Kimberley Process.

Mr. Roet (Israel): Like others, I would like to thank Angola for its able chairmanship in 2015 and wish the United Arab Emirates great success in assuming the chairmanship this year.

All too often, we meet here in this Hall to discuss intractable challenges and missed opportunities. Today I am very pleased to say that we have come together as an international body to mark an extraordinary accomplishment. For decades, the dark underworld of the diamond industry operated in the shadows. In fact, the glimmering light of diamonds, prized for their clarity, blinded us from the truth that these diamonds were being used as tools of warfare and served as financial lifelines for ruthless warlords. Unbeknownst to most of us, the very diamonds being used to mark the beginning of lifelong relationships were often obtained under the most horrific human conditions, marked by the ending of countless lives.

From the Democratic Republic of the Congo to Angola and from Liberia to Sierra Leone, these so-called blood diamonds allowed warlords to usurp power from legitimate Governments and led to the enslavement and death of untold numbers of innocent men, women and children. Finally, 12 years ago, the world declared in a unified, crystal-clear voice — one could even say a diamond-clear voice — that enough was enough.

The magnitude and cruelty of the atrocities stemming from the illegal trade of diamonds led the international community — an alliance of Governments, leaders of industry and civil-society representatives — to establish a unique international scheme that requires States to regulate their diamond production and trade through a stringent system of Government certification. By doing so, the international community has been able to exclude blood diamonds from entering into the stream of international trade.

In the past few years, we have seen numerous achievements. These include the strengthening of the implementation of the peer-review system, the enhanced transparency and accuracy of statistical measurements, and the increasing involvement by various stakeholders in the Kimberly Process Certification Scheme. Thanks to a concerted global commitment equally matched by global action, 99 per cent of all diamonds sold today are certified conflict-free, which guarantees that diamond revenues are appropriately used for economic growth and sustainable development. The Kimberly Process is therefore directly contributing to the promotion of the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development (resolution 70/1), ensuring that the Sustainable Development Goals are met for all people in all places while leaving no one behind. As we embark on the long road of implementation of the 2030 Agenda, the accomplishment of the Kimberley Process has proved yet again that, as a family of nations, if we put our differences aside and unite, we can make a difference and be a positive force in improving our world.

As the world's leading exporter of diamonds and the host to its third-largest trading centre for diamonds, Israel was one of the first countries to raise awareness about conflict diamonds, one of the first countries to play a part in establishing the Kimberley Process, and the first country to issue a certificate when the Process went into effect in 2003. During its 2010 Kimberley Process chairmanship, Israel initiated the establishment of a sub-working group on trade facilitation and oversaw the membership process for four new countries.

Israel strongly reaffirms the importance of the tripartite nature of the Kimberley Process. Civil society must be fully involved in the Process, particularly in monitoring the implementation on the ground. The Kimberley Process must also enhance collaboration with diamond-industry associations, international organizations and enforcement agencies. All of those stakeholders benefit from the open exchange of information and access to it.

Millions of people, from small-scale miners to heavy equipment operators and from cutters to retailers, all rely on the diamond trade for their livelihoods. When managed and traded responsibly, legally mined diamonds can serve as a catalyst in improving and accelerating the standard of living of millions. We therefore have a duty, a duty to the miners who depend on diamonds for their livelihoods and a duty to demonstrate to nations blessed with natural resources that prosperity can replace poverty. We also have a duty to future generations to ensure that cooperation triumphs over conflict.

I will end by wishing us all *mazel* and *bracha*, Hebrew for "good fortune" and "blessing", as is traditionally said in the diamond industry all around the world to mark the successful close of a diamond transaction.

Mr. Nkoloi (Botswana): I would like to thank you, Sir, for convening this annual briefing and for giving my delegation the opportunity to contribute to the debate on it. At the outset, I would like to express my delegation's appreciation and gratitude to the Government of the Republic of Angola for its expert leadership as Chair of the Kimberley Process for 2015. We commend Angola for its leadership and engagement throughout the year and for ensuring that the report of the Process (A/70/596, annex) reached the Assembly.

My delegation attaches great importance to this agenda item, not only because it seeks to protect the legitimate trade in diamonds, but also because it symbolizes the international community's resolve to individually and collectively do its part to ensure that never again will resources such as diamonds bring sorrow and suffering to humankind.

As one of the founding members of the Kimberley Process and a country that is heavily dependent on these precious stones, Botswana attaches enormous importance to the ethical exploitation of and legitimate trade in rough diamonds. The regulation of the diamond trade through the Process has seen both success and challenges over the years. The Process requires that its members adhere to high standards in order to be able to certify that shipments of diamonds entering and leaving their territories are legitimate. Participating States must meet minimum requirements, which include establishing national legislation and institutions, as well as export, import and internal controls, and committing to transparency and the exchange of statistical data.

Complementing the efforts of the Kimberley Process and its oversight of rough diamonds, today's annual draft resolution (A/70/L.40) and other United Nations resolutions continue to prevent links, and break them, between the illegal trade in rough diamonds and armed conflict. They reaffirm the Process as the international vehicle supporting that cause and welcome its continued role in regulating the diamond trade. That is why my delegation continues to support the Process's principles and objectives and its Certification Scheme, as it works to eliminate illicit rough diamonds from the legitimate diamond market and prevent such illegal transactions from promoting armed conflict and unlawful activities that threaten international peace and security.

Informed by its long-term national interests and an overall strategic vision aimed at using ethical means to harness its natural capital, Botswana has believed since diamonds were first discovered in the idea of using them to do good to the benefit of its people, while promoting socioeconomic development. For that reason, we are committed to safeguarding and promoting the integrity of the diamond industry and preserving its wealth for posterity. As Botswana's former President Festus Mogae once said a decade ago,

> "For our people in Botswana, every diamond purchase represents food on the table, better living conditions, better health care, potable and safe drinking water, more roads to connect our remote communities and much more".

In short, for Botswana, diamonds are for development, period. There is a direct correlation between diamond revenues and food on the table, as well as education for the young, since the diamond industry accounts for more than 40 per cent of the Government of Botswana's revenue. Through it we enhance our prospects for achieving our development goals, including the recently adopted Sustainable Development Goals of the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development (resolution 70/1). With a proven track record and a tradition of judicious management of our natural capital, we continue to learn while sharing our experiences and best practices with the Kimberley Process family. Consistent with the ideals and principles of the Charter of the United Nations, including saving succeeding generations from the scourge of war, we would like to once again reiterate our strong support for and faith in the Kimberley Process and to request that the issue remain on the Assembly's agenda in order to ensure that we continue to curb and right the wrong of those who still believe in using diamonds to harm humankind.

Today the international community, and especially the African continent, with its Agenda 2063, has shifted its attention to entrenching a culture focused on inclusivity, sustainable development and silencing the guns. It is our wish and dream to see post-conflict countries make a priority of investing in people-centred development for sustainable livelihoods. My delegation remains confident that through joint efforts such as the Kimberley Process initiative, we will continue to ensure that, more than ever, diamonds become a major source of financing for economic development, not a catalyst for civil wars.

In conclusion, Botswana welcomes the Kimberley Process plenary's endorsement in Angola of the United Arab Emirates' assumption of its Chair for 2016, and the selection of the Commonwealth of Australia as Vice-Chair. We wholeheartedly congratulate the United Arab Emirates on its new role and pledge our full support and cooperation to it in its discharge of its mandate.

Mr. Almazrouei (United Arab Emirates) (*spoke in Arabic*): My delegation would like to thank you, Sir, for convening today's meeting. We would also like to express our thanks and gratitude to Angola, the outgoing Chair of the Kimberley Process, for its distinguished leadership, and with which as Vice-Chair we had the opportunity to work. We would also like to thank Angola for its hard work in facilitating and coordinating the negotiations on the draft resolution we will adopt today (A/70/L.40), which resulted in a text that we were able to adopt by consensus.

The United Arab Emirates joined the consensus on the draft resolution because we believe it is an important step in the consensus among all the stakeholders in the Kimberley Process, which will help to make the Process more effective and successful. The draft resolution reaffirms the resolve and commitment of all stakeholders to strengthening and implementing the Process in full. The United Arab Emirates is proud to have been chosen as the Chair of the Process for 2016, proof that our member countries believe in its abilities and have confidence that it can contribute effectively to implementing the Process at the international level. We would also like to congratulate Australia on its election as Vice-Chair and look forward happily to working with the Australian delegation in the coming year.

Our election makes us the first Arab country to have the honour of chairing the Kimberley Process. We began implementing the Process in 2003, becoming thus the first Arab country to adopt the Certification Scheme. Since then we have taken measures and initiatives that include enacting a federal law controlling imports and exports of rough diamonds and have instituted restrictions and regulations for the diamond trade, as a result of which the United Arab Emirates has become a leading centre for the world trade in diamonds.

As Chair of the Kimberley Process, we look forward to sharing our deep expertise with other members and will spare no effort to cooperate with the relevant Government bodies and civil-society organizations in order to propose new ideas and initiatives aimed at enriching the Process and enhancing collaboration among all stakeholders. That should help us to protect legitimate and legal trading and ensure that consumers can buy clear and conflict-free diamonds. The United Arab Emirates intends to host a large number of meetings and conferences for Kimberley Process members in Dubai in 2016, designed to enable us to fully understand the upgraded infrastructure that our country has instituted in this sector.

The Acting President (*spoke in Arabic*): I would like to congratulate the United Arab Emirates on its assumption of the chairship of the Kimberley Process for 2016.

(*spoke in English*)

The Assembly will now take a decision on draft resolution A/70/L.40, entitled "The role of diamonds in fuelling conflict: breaking the link between the illicit transaction of rough diamonds and armed conflict as a contribution to prevention and settlement of conflicts".

I give the floor to the representative of the Secretariat.

Mr. Zhang Saijin (Department for General Assembly and Conference Management): I should like to announce that, since the submission of draft resolution A/70/L.40, and in addition to those delegations already listed in the document, the following countries have become sponsors of the draft resolution: Armenia, Canada, Switzerland, the United States of America and Viet Nam.

The Acting President: May I take it that the Assembly decides to adopt draft resolution A/70/L.40?

Draft resolution A/70/L.40 was adopted (resolution 70/252).

The Acting President: May I take it that it is the wish of the General Assembly to conclude its consideration of agenda item 33?

It was so decided.

The meeting rose at 10.55 a.m.

United Nations A/70/PV.84

General Assembly

Seventieth session

Official Records

84th plenary meeting
Friday, 12 February 2016, 10 a.m.
New York

President: Mr. Lykketoft .... (Denmark)

The meeting was called to order at 10.05 a.m.

Agenda item 138 (*continued*)

Scale of assessments for the apportionment of the expenses of the United Nations (A/70/722/Add.1, A/70/722/Add.2, A/70/722/Add.3, A/70/722/Add.4, A/70/722/Add.5 and A/70/722/Add.6)

The President: Before proceeding to the other items on our agenda, I should like, in keeping with established practice, to draw the attention of the General Assembly to documents A/70/722/Add.1, A/70/722/Add.2, A/70/722/Add.3, A/70/722/Add.4, A/70/722/Add.5 and A/70/722/Add.6, in which the Secretary-General informs the President of the Assembly that, since the issuance of his communication contained in document A/70/722, Bahrain, Burundi, the Dominican Republic, the Islamic Republic of Iran, Mali, the Marshall Islands, Saint Vincent and the Grenadines, Vanuatu and the Bolivarian Republic of Venezuela have made the necessary payments to reduce their arrears below the amount specified in Article 19 of the Charter.

May I take it that the General Assembly duly takes note of the information contained in that document?

It was so decided.

Agenda item 9 (*continued*)

Report of the Economic and Social Council

Draft resolution (A/70/L.31/Rev.1)

The President: Members will recall that the Assembly held a debate on agenda item 9, jointly with agenda item 15, at its 36th plenary meeting, on 19 October 2015. Members will also recall that, under agenda item 9, the Assembly adopted resolution 70/78, at its 70th plenary, on 9 December 2015.

I now give the floor to the representative of Thailand to introduce draft resolution A/70/L.31/Rev.1.

Ms. Niyomthai (Thailand): On behalf of the Group of 77 and China and of the Republic of Angola, I have the honour to introduce draft resolution A/70/L.31/Rev.1, entitled "Graduation of Angola from the least developed country category".

We would like to stress the need for a smooth transition strategy for countries graduating from the list of least developed countries. It is therefore important to acknowledge the realities on the ground and the structural weaknesses that Angola faces. We ask its development partners to be forthcoming in recognizing those vulnerabilities and to continue to provide assistance for the country's smooth transition and long-term development.

On behalf of the Group of 77 and China, I would like to thank all partners involved in the negotiations on the draft resolution's text, and we hope the General Assembly will adopt it by consensus.

The President: May I take it that it is the wish of the General Assembly to adopt draft resolution A/70/L.31/Rev.1?

The draft resolution was adopted (resolution 70/253).

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The President: I now call on the representative of Angola, who wishes to speak in explanation of position on the resolution just adopted.

Mr. Gaspar Martins (Angola): I would like to thank you, Mr. President, for scheduling this plenary meeting to consider agenda item 9, "Report of the Economic and Social Council", and to take action on resolution 70/253, regarding Angola's graduation from the leastdeveloped country category. It is indeed a great honour for me to address the General Assembly today and to reaffirm my country's commitment to the graduation process.

I also wish to express our gratitude for the positive and constructive comments, support and encouragement from Member States during the informal consultations, which enabled us to reach an agreement on the text. I would especially like to thank Mr. Alain Wilfried Biya, Second Secretary of the Permanent Mission of Cameroon, who facilitated the discussion of the text.

In the past decade, Angola and the Angolan economy have witnessed strong growth. The country was commended by the International Monetary Fund and the World Bank for both its macroeconomic stability and its economic growth, which resulted in recommendations from the United Nations proposing Angola's graduation from the group of least developed countries. Nevertheless, we recognize that Angola, a commodity-dependent developing country, is currently experiencing a slightly difficult economic period due to the drop in international oil prices, which has affected the entire world economy. Recent external shocks, including the global economic crisis and the decrease in commodity prices, have triggered an economic slowdown and highlighted the fact that diversification is crucial to the sustained growth of the Angolan economy.

As of now — and we have started right at the beginning of the year — in terms of diversification purposes, Angola has adopted and is still implementing various programmes aimed at helping it to adjust to the changes in its national economy and in the world.

The National Development Strategy, which is the main vehicle for economic diversification until 2025, is being implemented. The aim is to guide and improve the pace and quality of development in the following ways: improving the quality of life of Angolans, preserving macroeconomic stability, promoting an active employment policy and enhancing national human resources, and increasing productivity and transformation in the markets. In addition, the Angola Invests programme is intended to support small companies focused on agriculture, industry, retail, fishing and other sectors with a view to diversifying the economy and increasing business activities. Moreover, the Medium-term Agriculture Sector Development Plan seeks to achieve growth and improve the production of cereals, fruits, vegetables, roots and tubers to make the country self-sufficient in food.

Given the significant drop of oil prices, the authorities have adjusted the State budget to take into account more conservative assumptions. The Council of Ministers has approved a national strategy to face the current difficulties by replacing oil as the main source of revenues, controlling the expansion of the deficit and promoting debt sustainability, improving the efficiency and effectiveness of private investments, increasing domestic production and promotomg the export of goods and services in the short and medium terms.

As the text of the resolution on graduation reaffirms, graduating from the category of least developed country should not result in a disruption to development plans, programmes and projects. It is therefore our opinion that the Government of Angola still needs to build a resilient and sustainable economy as a pathway towards a real graduation from the list of least developed countries. The Istanbul Programme of Action envisions a smooth transition period for graduating countries. Angola sees such a transition as a precondition for any eventual graduation, so as to ensure that negative impacts are addressed through policy interventions aimed at each respective vulnerability and at capacity development.

Angola would like to note that in the course of negotiating the resolution, we were able to witness the full commitment of the Member States in the Assembly to that fundamental principle. As we are now facing challenging times and are engaged in improving our economic diversification and reducing our social vulnerabilities, it is encouraging to see that the international community stands by Angola.

My delegation understands that our request to be afforded, on an exceptional basis, an additional preparatory period of two years before the start of the three-year period leading to graduation is well received and appropriate. The additional preparatory period will enable Angola to craft and implement policies and strategies focused on, among other things, strengthening structural reforms to safeguard macroeconomic stability and debt sustainability; continuing investments in the non-oil sector; strengthening the business environment to generate diversification and job creation, mainly in agriculture, electricity, manufacturing and services; improving the quality and skills of human resources; and, finally, strengthening our educational sector.

Angola is overcoming the consequences of several decades of sociopolitical crises and is willing to graduate from the least-developed-country status. We look forward to working with the United Nations system and other partners in putting in place balanced and development-oriented strategies and policies, as well as the necessary assistance to help address the development challenges that we face.

The resolution just adopted demonstrates the support and goodwill of the international community to see developing countries such as Angola achieve sustainable development. On behalf of the Government of Angola, I would once again like to take this opportunity to sincerely express our gratitude for all the invaluable support of the international community. Angola wishes to express special thanks to the members of the Group of 77 and China, as well as the members of the least developed countries. I am also very grateful to our development partners especially the European Union, the United States of America and Australia, for their invaluable support. We look forward to members' support in that endeavour.

The President: The General Assembly has thus concluded this stage of its consideration of agenda item 9.

Agenda item 114 (*continued*)

Appointments to fill vacancies in subsidiary organs and other appointments

(f) Appointment of members of the Joint Inspection Unit

Note by the President of the General Assembly (A/70/689)

The President: As indicated in the note contained in document A/70/689, as a result of the expiration of the term of office, on 31 December 2016, of Mr. Jorge Flores Callejas of Honduras, the General Assembly is required, during its current session, to appoint a person to serve as a member of the Joint Inspection Unit for a full term of office beginning on 1 January 2017 and ending on 31 December 2021.

In accordance with the procedures described in article 3, paragraph 1, of the statute of the Joint Inspection Unit, and having consulted the regional group concerned, I have requested Honduras to propose a candidate to fill the vacancy.

I would like to remind members that, in accordance with resolution 59/267, of 23 December 2004, the candidate should have experience in at least one of the following fields: oversight, audit, inspection, investigation, evaluation, finance, project evaluation, programme evaluation, human resources management, management, public administration, monitoring and/or programme performance, as well as knowledge of the United Nations system and its role in international relations.

As also indicated in document A/70/689, as a result of the consultations held in accordance with paragraph 2, article 3, of the statute of the Joint Inspection Unit, including consultations with the President of the Economic and Social Council and the Secretary-General, in his capacity as Chair of the United Nations System Chief Executives Board for Coordination, I submit to the Assembly the candidature of Mr. Jorge Flores Callejas of Honduras for re-appointment as a member of the Joint Inspection Unit for an additional five-year term of office beginning on 1 January 2017 and expiring on 31 December 2021.

May I take it that it is the wish of the General Assembly to re-appoint the candidate?

It was so decided.

The President: The General Assembly has thus concluded this stage of its consideration of sub-item (f) of agenda item 114.

Agenda items 16 and 117 (*continued*)

Culture of peace

The United Nations Global Counter-Terrorism Strategy

Report of the Secretary-General (A/70/674)

Draft resolution A/70/L.41

The President: I should like to inform members that the letter dated 22 December 2015 from the Secretary-General to the President of the General Assembly introducing the Plan of Action to Prevent Violent Extremism has been circulated in document A/70/675.

Members will recall that the Assembly held a debate on agenda item 16, and adopted resolutions 70/19 and 70/20, at its 66th plenary meeting, on 3 December 2015, and adopted resolution 70/109, at its 72nd plenary meeting, on 10 December 2015.

Members will also recall that the Secretary-General briefed members informally on 15 January about the Plan. Today, we will take action on the short, procedural draft resolution A/70/L.41, which welcomes the Secretary-General's initiative. In doing so, we will deliver a clear signal that the General Assembly is gravely concerned by the issue of violent extremism. I thank all members for their cooperation and constructive engagement in the preparation of the draft resolution.

Today, sadly, violent extremism is on the rise across the world. All too often, a number of members' Governments and peoples have been confronted by waves of terrorist attacks, violence and intimidation. The pain, fear and destruction caused by those acts present real and difficult challenges for all Member States.

As a phenomenon, violent extremism is not new. In our age, the risk is that radicalized individuals may gain access to, and then proceed to use, tools that can inflict mass killing and significant destruction. Some extremists are already skillfully exploiting the Internet to spread their message of hate and violence as never before — messages that are contrary to the commitment to peace that brings us together in this Hall.

Confronting and preventing violent extremism is fundamental to protecting our societies and our people. But to be truly effective, our approach to prevention must remain faithful to our common values and our common humanity. And it must secure peace and security in a manner that respects human rights and the rule of law and advances sustainable development.

I commend the Secretary-General for his timely initiative and for preparing his Plan of Action to Prevent Violent Extremism (A/70/674). Collectively, we must tackle this issue with the urgency it so obviously requires. Today's debate is an opportunity to advance the global debate on that complex issue and to discuss how better to use the tools and resources we have to tackle the drivers of this phenomenon. I look forward to hearing the contributions of Member States.

We shall now proceed to consider draft resolution A/70/L.41.

May I take it that it is the wish of the General Assembly to adopt draft resolution A/70/L.41?

Draft resolution A/70/L.41 was adopted (resolution 70/254).

The President: I now give the floor to the observer of the European Union.

Mr. Vale de Almeida (European Union): I have the honour to speak on behalf of the European Union (EU) and its member States. The candidate countries the former Yugoslav Republic of Macedonia, Montenegro, Serbia and Albania; the country of the Stabilization and Association Process and potential candidate Bosnia and Herzegovina; the European Free Trade Association country Iceland, member of the European Economic Area; as well as Ukraine, the Republic of Moldova and Georgia, align themselves with this statement.

I thank you, Mr. President, for convening this debate on such an important issue. It offers a new opportunity for the European Union and its member States to reiterate their support for the Secretary-General's Plan of Action to Prevent Violent Extremism (A/70/674). We are still analysing the concrete recommendations from the perspective of coherence and coordination, including the funding aspects, with ongoing initiatives conducted by United Nations and non-United Nations entities. But certainly, the Plan of Action constitutes a clear and balanced tool to help States in their efforts to prevent violent extremism.

We welcome the connections the Plan of Action makes between preventing conflicts and preventing violent extremism. A conflict-prevention and peacebuilding approach applied at all levels can indeed make a significant contribution to preventing violent extremism. This approach includes, first, promoting good governance, including through security sector reform; secondly, tackling political, social and economic exclusion; and thirdly, last but not least, promoting human rights and opportunities for all. We also welcome the links made by the Plan of Action to the Sustainable Development Goals, including the gender perspective.

Most of the Plan's content reflects what the European Union has been working on now for more than a decade. Internally, since 2004, we have had in place our own prevention strategy — reviewed in 2014 — and a general European Union counter-terrorism strategy since 2005, which includes prevention as one of its pillars. Moreover, the strategy and regional action plans on foreign terrorist fighters from the European Union, such as those for Syria, Iraq and the Sahel, include preventing radicalization as a key priority. The conclusions adopted recently by the Council of the European Union state the need to establish counterterrorism action plans that include countering violent extremism, with priority to countries in the Middle East and North Africa region.

The EU is also actively participating in several initiatives, such as the Global Counterterrorism Forum, the Hedayah Centre in Abu Dhabi and the Global Community Engagement and Resilience Fund, which are mobilizing expertise aimed at preventing violent extremism. As can be seen, EU internal and external efforts on prevention are in line with the United Nations Plan of Action.

We welcome today's resolution 70/254, by which the international community is sending a united message of engagement in the prevention of violent extremism. The matter will remain high on our agenda, and we look forward to engaging in further discussions in the context of the upcoming Geneva conference in April and the tenth anniversary review of the United Nations Global Counter-Terrorism Strategy, in June.

Ms. Vilde (Latvia): I have the honour to speak on behalf of Estonia, Lithuania and my own country, Latvia. We align ourselves with the statement just delivered by the observer of the European Union. We express our appreciation to you, Mr. President, for organizing this timely debate.

The magnitude of the threat emanating from the spread of violent extremism requires united and coordinated collective action. There is a growing need for credible political solutions and a more comprehensive approach to meeting the increasing challenges posed by violent extremism. In that regard, we welcome the initiative of the Secretary-General and the efforts taken in the preparation of the Plan of Action to Prevent Violent Extremism (A/70/674). We also welcome the adoption of the procedural resolution 70/254, which is a consistent next step for further substantive and inclusive dialogue on the matter. Although more time is needed for thorough analysis of the recommendations contained in the Plan of Action, we would like to emphasize a few areas of action that deserve special attention.

First, we commend the fact that Plan of Action addresses the root causes of violent extremism and emphasizes systematic preventive efforts, including conflict prevention. We appreciate the links with the Sustainable Development Goals and targets, particularly those related to promoting peaceful and inclusive societies, gender equality and women's empowerment and accountable and inclusive institutions at all levels.

Secondly, the cross-border nature of violent extremism requires action at global, regional and national levels. Although the primary responsibility for preventing violent extremism lies with Member States, national efforts must go hand in hand with enhanced regional cooperation. Also, regional instruments need to be strengthened. In that regard, a good example is the Additional Protocol to the Council of Europe Convention on the Prevention of Terrorism, which was opened for signature in Riga last October and has already been signed by almost half of the Council's member States. The Riga Protocol is the first regional legal instrument to implement the provisions of Security Council resolution 2178 (2014), on foreign terrorist fighters, and its special focus is on the prevention of terrorist training and travel abroad for the purpose of terrorism.

Finally, in the age of the Internet and social media it is impossible to fight violent extremism without efficient communications strategies based on international human rights standards. Preventing and combating terrorism and violent extremism should not become a pretext for repressive action against free speech, whether online or offline. We have to make sure that our actions aimed at preventing violent extremism are fully in line with existing human rights obligations. Promoting the freedom of expression, pluralism, and protecting journalists should be important components of those efforts.

We once again thank you, Mr. President, for facilitating this pertinent discussion, and we look forward to further deliberations.

Mr. Al-Mouallimi (Saudi Arabia): In Saudi Arabia's capacity as the coordinator on counter-terrorism within the Organization of Islamic Cooperation (OIC), and on behalf of the countries of the OIC, I wish to thank you, Sir, for convening today's debate, which affords an opportunity to the member and observer States of the United Nations to express their views on violent extremism and the Secretary-General's Plan of Action to Prevent Violent Extremism.

The OIC believes that violent extremism and terrorism undermine our shared objectives of a peaceful and prosperous world, and that no country in the world is immune to the effects of violent extremism and terrorism. The OIC therefore supports efforts at the national, regional and international levels to prevent violent extremism and terrorism. In that regard, the OIC welcomes the initiative of the Secretary-General to develop a Plan of Action to Prevent Violent Extremism, and takes note of the Plan of Action (A/70/674).

The OIC reaffirms its unequivocal rejection of all attempts to associate any country, race, religion, culture or nationality with violent extremism and terrorism. While the OIC emphasizes that there is no agreed definition of violent extremism, it fully subscribes to the need to prevent that phenomenon. The OIC believes that a comprehensive preventive approach to violent extremism should address its local and external drivers in a balanced manner. Cooperative efforts at the international level must be conducted in full respect of the purposes and principles of the Charter of the United Nations. The OIC has a principled position against terrorism in all its forms and manifestations, committed by whomsoever and wherever. The OIC recognizes that terrorism cannot be tackled by security or military means alone and underlines the need to attach due attention to, and devising concrete plans for, addressing the various dimensions and root causes of terrorism.

We also consider it important to address the root causes of the global phenomenon of terrorism, violence and extremism and the means to address them at the political, economic, social and intellectual levels. In that vein, the OIC recalls the provisions of resolutions 68/127 and 70/109, on a world against violence and violent extremism.

On a comprehensive approach to tackle terrorism, the OIC believes that due attention and concrete plans of action must address the following aspects and dimensions of the phenomenon of terrorism: the political and socioeconomic contexts that bring forth conditions conducive to the spread of terrorism and violent extremism, such as continued economic deprivation, exclusion, alienation, separation and marginalization of people, and the forced dismantling of political, legal, security and sociocultural institutions; the deep impact and legacy of historical injustices done to colonized peoples or those under occupation, their suffering and the forced destruction of their national institutions, culture and identity and the denial of their rights to self-determination; the potential of external actors penetrating terrorist and extremist groups for the purpose of serving their own political agenda and the threat of non-Arab and non-Muslim fighters; and the need to counter all types of radical extremist discourse, including through the media and new communications technologies, particularly the Internet, in order to delegitimize the violent and manipulative acts committed in the name of religion, ideology or claims of cultural superiority.

The OIC stresses the importance of integrating youth and women in the efforts and decision-making processes regarding violent extremism, while we also underscore that children and youth represent the future of society and that failure to protect their rights can contribute to an environment conducive to crime and violent extremism. In that regard, the OIC recalls and welcomes the Security Council open debate on the role of youth in countering violent extremism and promoting peace, organized under Jordan's presidency of the Security Council in April 2015 (see S/PV.7432), which brought this important matter to the attention of the international community and served as a transparent and vital platform to discuss Member States' views on the matter.

The OIC expresses serious concern about the increase in intolerance and discrimination against Muslims, resulting in the upsurge of Islamophobia, a phenomenon that is an affront to the human rights and dignity of Muslims. The OIC recalls the Human Rights Council resolution 16/18, entitled "Combating intolerance, negative stereotyping and stigmatization of, and discrimination, incitement to violence and violence against, persons based on religion or belief" as an important tool to counter radicalization, marginalization and alienation. Furthermore, the OIC calls for the resolution's effective implementation by the international community as a means to deprive terrorist groups of any justification for violent extremism on the grounds of ethno-religious stigmatization and discrimination.

The OIC calls upon all States to prevent any advocacy of religious discrimination, hostility or violence and defamation of Islam by incorporating legal and administrative measures that render defamation illegal and punishable by law. The OIC also urges member and observer States to adopt specific and relevant educational measures at all levels.

The OIC recognizes the importance of interfaith and intercultural dialogue as an effective mechanism to combat extremism and incitement to hatred based on religion. The OIC also recognizes the efforts made by the King Abdullah Bin Abdulaziz International Centre for Interreligious and Intercultural Dialogue in that regard.

The OIC reaffirms the need for the effective and comprehensive implementation of the United Nations Global Counter-Terrorism Strategy (resolution 60/288) and the need for a robust follow-up mechanism to be in place. The OIC also considers it imperative to respect the views and positions of Member and Observer States and to develop consensus by taking them into account during consideration of the pertinent agenda items of the General Assembly and other relevant processes.

OIC member States support resolution 70/254, adopted a short while ago, which welcomes the efforts of the Secretary-General and takes note of his Plan of Action to Prevent Violent Extremism. To that end, the OIC stands ready to engage positively with all Member and Observer States in a thorough and constructive examination of the Secretary-General's Plan.

Ms. Wilson (Australia): We also would like to thank you, Sir, for convening this formal debate on such an important issue.

We thank the Secretary-General for his Plan of Action to Prevent Violent Extremism (A/70/674), which Australia fully supports. Furthermore, we are pleased that the General Assembly has adopted resolution 70/254, which welcomes the initiative of the Secretary-General. Through the resolution, Member States have sent a unified message of their commitment to tackle violent extremism. We have also heard some very encouraging words from Saudi Arabia in terms of our broad support.

The Plan recognizes that we cannot afford to wait until people have already been radicalized and turned to violence. That is in line with Australia's approach to countering violent extremism, which aims to reduce the risk of violent extremism by intervening early and tackling the root of the problem. The Plan also provides a framework to carry forward the work done globally throughout 2015 through the regional summits on countering violent extremism, including the one held in Sydney in June 2015. The Plan's call for countries to develop national and regional plans of action to prevent violent extremism underscores the need for the international community to deal effectively with the global terrorist threat. We support the Plan's recommendation that national plans to prevent violent extremism be developed to address national conditions.

Australia is committed to a regional and international approach to meet the shared challenges of violent extremism and is active regionally through capacity-building programmes on countering violent extremism. Violent extremism is an increasing threat to world security and stability that undermines human rights and sustainable development. On a related point, Australia strongly supports the modernization of the directives on peace and security of the Development Assistance Committee of the Organization for Economic Cooperation and Development to dispel any ambiguity over the use of eligible official development assistance funds in countering violent extremism

Australia also supports the proposal for a whole-of-United-Nations approach to implement the Plan and believes that there is significant capacity for implementation through existing mechanisms, such as the Global Community Engagement and Resilience Fund (GCERF). The GCERF has an established Government/private-partnership framework designed to deliver grants for community-based projects on countering violent extremism. The GCERF is uniquely placed to contribute to the effective implementation of the Plan, which acknowledges the importance of engaging communities, empowering youth and women and promoting education as part of a comprehensive approach to addressing the drivers of violent extremism.

Australia looks forward to engaging in further discussions on the Plan at the meeting on countering violent extremism to be hosted by Switzerland in Geneva, and in the context of the Global Counter-Terrorism Strategy Review.

Ms. Sison (United States of America): I thank you, President Lykketoft, for your leadership and support for the Secretary-General's visionary initiative to fight terrorism through preventing extremism. The General Assembly's consensus adoption of resolution 70/254 today sends a strong message that we are united in confronting terrorism and the poisonous ideologies that sustain it.

Threats from violent extremism, especially when leading to terrorism, undermine security and development around the globe. From Jakarta to San Bernardino, from Paris to Ouagadougou, terrorists seek to expand their reach and resonance. They exploit ongoing conflicts, join forces with criminal networks, find safe haven in weak and repressive States and propagate hate and recruit via social media. Even as we work to defeat and degrade the most virulent terrorist group — Da'esh — we know that defeating terrorists on the battlefield is not enough. This is indeed a new war of ideas.

The terrorist threats will not be defeated with bombs or military means alone. Such measures will not succeed unless we also address the fundamental drivers of violent extremism. We must find ways to prevent our people from being radicalized in the first place, which makes them vulnerable to terrorist recruitment. And we must do so in ways that do not engender more sympathy and more support for terrorist causes. If we fail to do so, we will forever find ourselves in a vicious cycle of tit-for-tat with terrorists, with countless innocent lives lost.

That is why it is so very critical to address the conditions conducive to terrorism and implement human-rights-based counter-terrorism programs within the rule of law. Many countries have already begun this journey, developing concrete national action plans to counter violent extremists and to better address the drivers of radicalization. To boost those efforts, a Leaders Summit was held in New York last September on countering the Islamic State in Iraq and the Levant and violent extremism, during which many world leaders reaffirmed their commitment to preventing and countering violent extremism. The Secretary-General now has presented his own vision on how to mobilize the United Nations in pursuit of those same goals.

The United States strongly welcomes the Secretary-General's Plan of Action to Prevent Violent Extremism (A/70/674), and we commend him for his initiative. The Plan provides actionable recommendations that States should begin to consider immediately. In addition, the Plan provides a framework for the United Nations system, with all of its various agencies, offices, missions and programmes, to advance these goals as well. The United States particularly welcomes the Plan's core recommendation that each Member State develop its own comprehensive national action plan to prevent and counter violent extremism. We also support the Plan's call for greater regional and international planning to prevent and counter violent extremism. Such cross-border cooperation is critical in today's interconnected world.

We also underscore the importance of involving a diverse range of Government and non-Government stakeholders in developing and implementing such plans. The Plan of Action's call for an interdisciplinary, all-of-society approach is critical. Progress can be achieved only through an integrated approach that includes national and local Governments, the private sector, young people, women, religious and educational leaders and civil society more broadly. But there is truly no one-size-fits-all solution to those challenges. For that reason, we strongly welcome the Secretary-General's recommendation that national action plans be tailored to local conditions. Our Governments have learned the lesson over many years that local perspectives and conditions must be taken into account in any effective approach to the prevention of violent extremism. We also welcome the emphasis that the Plan places on strengthening good governance as well as promoting human rights and the rule of law. They are essential ingredients in any effort to eliminate the drivers of violent extremism.

Finally, the United States appreciates the fact that the Plan of Action provides the basis for the first-ever approach encompassing the entire United Nations for implementing key parts of the United Nations Global Counter-Terrorism Strategy. To stay ahead of that threat, the United Nations must improve the coordination among its many internal offices and agencies. The United States looks forward to working closely with partners, both among Member States and United Nations bodies, to ensure that the Organization is positioned as well as possible to support implementation of the Plan's recommendations. That means making existing assistance more directly relevant to preventing violent extremism in specific contexts, as well as designing new programmes.

Different countries have different perspectives on this challenge. We may even disagree about the particular factors that drive radicalization in our diverse societies. We will have ample time to continue this dialogue, including at a major United Nations meeting in Geneva this spring and during the General Assembly's review of the Global Counter-Terrorism Strategy in the summer. Nevertheless, the Secretary-General's Plan of Action provides a framework today, with a set of principles that can help us accomplish our shared goals of fighting terrorism and confronting violent ideologies. We encourage the Assembly to unite behind those goals.

Mr. Lamek (France) (*spoke in French*): I would first like to associate myself with the statement delivered by the observer of the European Union.

I would like to emphasize that we believe the Plan of Action to Prevention Violent Extremism (A/70/674) presented by the Secretary-General on 15 January to be of major importance. France therefore welcomes the fact that the General Assembly has today decided to show its unanimous support for that initiative by adopting resolution 70/254, which is brief but goes to the heart of the issue. The Plan of Action is designed to unite and better coordinate the efforts that all of us, both as Member States and in the United Nations, at the national, regional and international levels, are making to prevent radicalization — an essential aspect of the fight against terrorism. It represents the practical realization of the strategic role that the United Nations should play today in guiding and coordinating action in the area.

More specifically, since one of the goals of this debate is to tackle the substance of the issue, the seven areas identified by the Secretary-General, particularly that of engaging young people, are, in our view, very relevant. The recommendations to Member States are also particularly welcome and will, we hope, help to strengthen the effectiveness of the action taken by the international community.

The prevention of radicalization and violent extremism is a national priority for France, and we are very engaged in that area. For us, that threat is represented not just by the 254 French fighters who have returned home from Syria and Iraq but also includes the nearly 1,900 French nationals or residents involved with jihadi affiliates, including 597 on the ground. In that regard, I would like to cite some of the measures that France has taken, many of which are in the areas of action identified by the Secretary-General.

The essentially preventive dimension of our efforts has been deployed in our national plan for combating violent radicalization and terrorist networks, which was adopted in April 2014. That plan set up a hotline for families and others worried about their loved ones. So far, our interministerial committee on crime prevention and radicalization has received more than 7,000 reports of persons at risk of being radicalized. We are also working on the speedy creation of a support centre for young people returning from conflict zones, who will not be prosecuted by the courts.

Along with that, a year ago, we established an Internet site focused on stopping jihadism and aimed at young people at risk of being radicalized and their families and friends, now with the addition of a related Twitter account and Facebook page to help to disseminate messages on social networks aimed at countering propaganda. We are also working to prevent radicalization through the Internet, including by blocking websites and removing content that glorifies terrorism. We have already blocked several sites in France under a law enacted on 13 November 2014, and we have established a close and constructive dialogue with major Internet companies. These are just a few examples, and France will, of course, continue with its commitment in the area, taking into account the recommendations of the Secretary-General.

Mr. Cardi (Italy), Vice-President, took the Chair.

The sequence of events that has begun today with our debate in the General Assembly and will continue in Geneva in April and in New York in June with the review of our Global Counter-Terrorism Strategy, is particularly timely and gives us an opportunity to reflect together on how States can take ownership of and implement the Secretary-General's recommendations. France welcomes the chance to participate in that process, with the aim of strengthening and making more effective our collective action to prevent the kind of violent extremism that leads to terrorism.

Mr. Charwath (Austria): At the outset, I would, of course, like to stress that Austria fully aligns itself with the statement delivered just now by the observer of the European Union.

Austria welcomes and supports the Secretary-General's Plan of Action to Prevent Violent Extremism (A/70/674). We are heartened by the fact that the General Assembly is in a position to welcome that important initiative. We appreciate the balanced and comprehensive nature of the document and welcome its recommendations for concrete measures to be operationalized, both within the United Nations and nationally and regionally by Member States. Austria commends the Secretary-General for taking a lead in promoting efforts at the local and national levels to prevent violent extremism, since it is those kinds of measures that will produce the most concrete results. We support the Plan's areas of focus, particularly regarding young people, and commend the emphasis on measures aimed at strengthening good governance, human rights and the rule of law, all of which are indispensable to the effective prevention of violent extremism and the fight against terrorism, as a couple of speakers before me have already stressed.

Austria looks forward to the implementation of the Plan of Action and of national and regional measures. We recognize that their effective implementation is the responsibility of each and every individual Member State, with the participation of local communities and civil society. We have already put in place a number of measures aimed at preventing violent extremism, with a particular focus on integration and social inclusion and human rights and gender equality, as well as intercultural and interreligious dialogue.

In the framework of Austria's national action plan on integration, those measures were developed after broad consultations, including with communities and civil society. Their implementation is being monitored by an expert body. We encourage other States Members of the United Nations also to implement the recommendations of the Secretary-General in his Plan of Action to Prevent Violent Extremism, which we are endorsing today. Austria looks forward to supporting the Plan of Action, also in relation to the upcoming review of the United Nations Global Counter-Terrorism Strategy.

Mr. Liu Jieyi (China) (*spoke in Chinese*): The Chinese delegation would like to thank the President for convening today's plenary meeting of the General Assembly. I thank Secretary-General Ban Ki-moon for submitting his Plan of Action to Prevent Violent Extremism (A/70/674).

In recent years violent extremist forces, such as the Islamic State of Iraq and the Sham (ISIS), have been expanding their presence in Iraq and Syria. That represents an increasing danger and poses a serious threat to peace and stability in the Middle East, Africa and Asia.

Recently, terrorist forces have demonstrated new features. First, their groups are more tightly knit. They control larger areas and use those areas as bases for spreading extremist ideologies, for carrying out terrorist attacks and for sending terrorists to the rest of the world.

Secondly, the networks of the international terrorist forces are expanding their activities. Terrorist organizations such as ISIS and Boko Haram have been coordinating with each other from afar and have launched attacks from multiple regions and countries, causing enormous damages and harm.

Thirdly, terrorist groups have been scaling up their use of new technology, such as the Internet and social media, and they have been plotting, organizing and financing terrorist activities and spreading extremist and violent ideologies to poison youth and encourage young people mired in difficult situations to join violent extremist groups.

Fourthly, terrorism and regional hotspots are interconnected. Terrorist groups exploit regional hotspots to step up their terrorist activities, thereby making the settlement of regional conflicts even more difficult and aggravating existing humanitarian crises.

In fighting terrorism and violent extremism, the international community should stay united, strengthen its coordination and form synergies. In that connection, I would like to make the following points.

First, in order to give full play to the coordinating and leading role of the United Nations and the Security Council, countries should fully implement the relevant resolutions of the Security Council and the United Nations Global Counter-Terrorism Strategy (resolution 60/288). The international community should, in accordance with the purposes and principles of the Charter of the United Nations and other accepted norms of international relations, give full play to the coordinating and leading role of the United Nations and form a united front to fight terrorism and scale up its efforts to do that at the global level. We can defeat terrorist groups only through effective coordination.

Secondly, we must adhere to unified criteria and standards and fight terrorism in all its forms and manifestations. Double standards should be avoided. We should never link terrorism with any specific ethnicity or religion. The Security Council has adopted resolutions on fighting terrorist groups, such as ISIS. Other terrorist groups have been placed on the sanctions lists. Countries should be resolute in their fight against violent extremist groups, especially those on the consolidated Security Council sanctions list.

Thirdly, the international community should focus on combating terrorist organizations that engage in terrorist activities through the Internet and social media. They issue violent audiovisual products, spread extremist ideologies, recruit people, raise funds and plot terrorist activities. Measures should therefore be taken to fight against such crimes. Countries should strengthen their cooperation in the regulation of the Internet, and the relevant United Nations agencies should also coordinate in formulating measures to strengthen such regulation. Furthermore, Member States should, in a coordinated manner, fight crimes perpetrated by terrorist groups using the Internet.

Fourthly, the root causes of the problems should be addressed. We must focus on economic and social development and promote the stabilization of situations in turbulent areas. The international community should pay more attention to the political settlement of conflicts.

The Chinese Government is resolute in its fight against terrorism and violent extremism in all its forms. We will vigorously fight violent terrorism, which challenges civilization and humankind. We will actively participate in the tenth review of the Global Counter-Terrorism Strategy and will work with the international community in fighting terrorism and violent extremism and maintaining global peace and tranquillity.

Mr. Lauber (Switzerland) (*spoke in French*): Switzerland wants to thank the President for organizing this debate and welcomes the adoption by the General Assembly of resolution 70/254, on the Secretary-General's Plan of Action to Prevent Violent Extremism. The adoption of that resolution will make it possible for us to respond to the Secretary-General's appeal and to send a strong and unified message from the entire international community to address one of the biggest challenges of our time.

The Plan of Action (A/70/674) is part of the broader framework of United Nations preventive action, the importance of which was underlined in the recent reviews on peace operations (see A/70/95), the peacebuilding architecture (see A/69/968) and the implementation of resolution 1325 (2000), which seek to prevent armed conflicts, atrocities, violence against women and children, and sexual violence in conflict. The Plan of Action stresses the need for a more comprehensive approach, entailing not only security-based counter-terrorism measures, but also more systematic measures directly addressing the root causes of violent extremism that can lead to terrorism.

Switzerland welcomes the increased importance given to pillars I and IV of the United Nations Global Counter-Terrorism Strategy (resolution 60/288). That will enable a full and balanced implementation of the Strategy and underscores the need to respect human rights and the rule of law in the prevention of violent extremism.

It is therefore essential today to implement systematic preventive measures that directly address the causes of violent extremism and that recognize political exclusion and social marginalization among its causes. The Plan of Action shows that only a multidisciplinary and preventive approach, together with counter-terrorism measures, is suitable for efficient, legitimate and sustainable action against violent extremism. Not only do extremist groups contribute to insecurity and are often parties to armed conflict, but their actions also impact peace efforts, sustainable development, human rights, the rule of law and humanitarian aid work. Thus it is important that the various actors — including peace workers, security actors, human rights defenders, educators, civil society and aid workers — all be involved. In that connection, we acknowledge the pertinence of the recommendations in the seven areas of action under the Plan of Action.

The Plan of Action offers considerable opportunities for the Global Community Engagement and Resilience Fund (GCERF), based in Geneva. The Plan encourages the identification of new sources of funding, while also emphasizing the role of the private sector. The GCERF has already contributed significantly to shaping the agenda on those two issues and will be in a position to play a key role in funding activities aimed at preventing violent extremism.

Switzerland also recognizes the importance of working to prevent violent extremism at the bilateral, regional and multilateral levels, especially with Governments, international organizations and forums and non-State actors, including civil society, armed groups and private-sector organizations.

Switzerland welcomes today's adoption of resolution 70/254, which marks the beginning of a process of discussion among Member States and which will be conducted in tandem with the review of the United Nations Global Counter-Terrorism Strategy scheduled for June.

Switzerland hopes to make a concrete contribution to those discussions through its organization, jointly with the United Nations, of a conference on the implementation of the Plan of Action to be held in Geneva on 7 and 8 April. We have circulated a save-the-date message to all delegations in New York and Geneva in that regard. The conference will be open to all Member States and to international and regional organizations, and representatives of non-governmental organizations will also be invited. It will be divided into two parts, of which the first, on 7 April, will be devoted to meetings with senior experts, and the second, on 8 April, will be a high-level meeting to be attended by the Secretary-General, Mr. Didier Burkhalter, Head of Switzerland's Federal Department of Foreign Affairs, and other ministers and high-level political representatives. We will communicate further information about the conference in due course.

Mr. Zagaynov (Russian Federation) (*spoke in Russian*): I would like to begin by expressing my gratitude to the President of the General Assembly for organizing this meeting and for the opportunity to exchange views on the Plan of Action to Prevent Violent Extremism presented by the Secretary-General (A/70/674), which we have studied carefully. We will continue our analysis with the bodies concerned, since the issues raised in the Plan have a wide interdisciplinary impact.

The international community today is dealing with an extremely dangerous trend — the rapid spread of ideas of violent extremism leading to terrorism. That ideology has exacerbated conflicts in various parts of the world and created a breeding ground for attracting new recruits to the ranks of terrorists, especially among young people. This is hardly the first time that we at the United Nations have examined the problem of violent extremism. Two months ago, the Assembly adopted by consensus resolution 70/109, entitled "A world against violence and violent extremism". The subject has also been reflected in the decisions of the Security Council, since it is so closely linked to the threats of incitement to terrorism and foreign terrorist fighters.

We believe firmly that States should play a central and decisive role in countering violent extremism and therefore in any international cooperative efforts in the area. In that regard, we note the reference in the Plan of Action to the principle of national ownership, which we believe deserves further reflection. It is vital that such action be based on a solid foundation of international law and in particular on the Charter of the United Nations, including its principles of the sovereignty and equality of States. The Plan of Action specifically focuses on the importance of respect for international law and the Charter regarding the use of force. We share its view of the interconnectedness of the tasks of countering violent extremism and settling conflicts.

The work of law-enforcement bodies constitutes an important part of our efforts to prevent and combat violent extremism and terrorism, and in our opinion, it would make sense to give it more attention. Of course, law enforcement is not the only way for States to fight violent extremism. As the Plan of Action rightly points out, working with young people, including in educational institutions — creating conditions conducive to their socioeconomic engagement, connecting them to local religious communities and leaders who can explain how radicalism differs from genuine religion — and ensuring that the media are disseminating appropriate information can all help to create an atmosphere that rejects violence and extremism. Another such task is preventing terrorists from using the Internet and social networks to spread extremist content.

Harnessing the potential of civil society is also an important element of efforts to counter violent extremism. We believe that the exploitation of that potential should be firmly linked to States' specific characteristics and traditions, without weakening their leading role in combating terror. We see civil society's primary role as being one of cooperation with the State's efforts on the ground by working with vulnerable sections of the population. In general, in the highly sensitive area of combating violent extremism, we should never use and certainly never impose any formulaic approaches, methods and classifications. It is vital to avoid the perception of international efforts and initiatives in the area as any kind of intrusive mechanism.

Successful policies against violent extremism will contribute to a proper understanding of the scope of the phenomenon and its causes. The concept of violent extremism must include its clear connection to terrorism and encompass a mastery of counter-terrorism terminology in international law and practice. That area has important links to the Security Council resolutions on the subject, including resolution 2178 (2014), referred to in the Plan of Action. The contribution of the United Nations to global efforts to combat terrorism must be part of the context of cooperating in the implementation of the foundational anti-terrorist decisions, particularly the relevant Security Council resolutions and the United Nations Global Counter-Terrorism Strategy.

Concerning the reasons for the growth of violent extremism, we feel that the analysis in the Plan of Action is incomplete. The events in Iraq and Libya are a clear demonstration of how external intervention can lead to the collapse of public institutions, leaving total chaos in its wake. It has created an ideal breeding ground for the growth of violent extremism and radicalization, which in turn has led to the spread of terrorism in the region and the emergence and consolidation of the Islamic State in Iraq and the Levant. Those essentially obvious and not insignificant facts are unfortunately not reflected in the report.

One of the document's key elements is its call for the development of national plans to counter violent extremism. In that regard, we would like to point out that the Russian Federation has undertaken sustained efforts to effectively protect its Government and citizens from threats of extremism and terrorism. Since November 2014 we have been working on a comprehensive strategy for countering extremism in the Russian Federation to the year 2025. Regional plans for implementing the strategy are being consolidated, and we are ready to share the experience that we have gained in the area with interested States and international organizations.

We would like to hope that the forthcoming discussion of the Plan of Action and its recommendations in the framework of the review of the Global Counter-Terrorism Strategy will contribute to our efforts to find the most effective and well-targeted responses to the threat of violent extremism.

Mr. Mahmoud (Egypt) (*spoke in Arabic*): At the outset, I would like to thank the President of the General Assembly for organizing today's important meeting on the Secretary-General's Plan of Action to Prevent Violent Extremism (A/70/674) and the Secretary-General for preparing his report.

Violent extremism leading to terrorism is one of the most dangerous challenges facing our world today. No one is exempt. Egypt has been aware of that danger for some time and has taken concrete action, including, inter alia, the implementation, starting in January 2015, of calls by the President of Egypt to renew ideas, concepts and religious discourse with a view to eliminating sectarianism and factional polarization, as well as dogmatism and extremism. Al-Azhar and Waqf scholars have taken the lead in that fundamental task. During the high-level segment of the seventieth session of the General Assembly, President Al Sisi presented an initiative entitled "Hope and Action for a New Direction", which seeks to prevent youth from falling into the trap of extremism and to get them to make use of their potential and energies (see A/70/PV.14, p.10).

The entire world, Muslims and non-Muslims alike, must be convinced that violent extremism leading to terrorism is not specific to any culture or people. It exists in all States. Our action to stave it off should be universal, rather than confined to the Arab region or Islamic States. All causes of violent extremism must be taken into consideration — as must national ownership, international law and practical law — and the necessary funding should be provided.

I would therefore like to focus on the following observations on the Plan of Action of the Secretary-General. The Plan of Action focuses on the national and regional dimensions more than the international dimension. It pays more attention to the internal causes that lead to violent extremism. Although the Plan refers to as-yet-unsettled protracted conflicts as one of the reasons of violent extremism, greater focus is placed on reasons such as the lack of good governance, violations of human rights and the rule of law, marginalization and discrimination. The Plan does not, however, clearly refer to continued foreign occupation as one of the reasons behind violent extremism, although there are indirect and weak allusions to that factor in paragraphs 33 and 35. In addition, the Plan contains no reference to all of the underlying internal causes of violent extremism that give rise to terrorism, such as Islamophobia and other factors. We can see, then, that the Plan targets a specific group of States, a bias that we categorically reject, especially since we witness the arrival of foreign terrorist fighters from European States in Syria and other States.

Let us be candid: if there is a serious desire to take action, the international community must realize that Israel's continued occupation of Palestine is one of the main reasons behind the proliferation of violent extremism, which, in turn, gives rise to terrorism. Other reasons include interference in the internal affairs of States, affronts to Islam and the Prophet — peace be upon him — under the pretext of the freedom of expression, and the treatment of Muslims as second-class citizens in some States. Furthermore, the Plan of Action seems to focus on the future, failing to stress the need to settle current conflicts and end the occupation. The Plan contains no reference to the need to implement the relevant Security Council resolutions, to respect international law or the findings and decisions of the International Court of Justice.

With regard to mobilizing the necessary resources for implementation, as mentioned in paragraph 46, the Plan refers to the need to use existing funding more efficiently. Paragraph 58, subparagraph (l), refers to the development of a proposal for a Secretary-General's fund to support innovative projects designed to prevent violent extremism. It is clear from the contents of the Plan that the trend is to try to use existing resources and voluntary contributions. That would mean reducing part of the funding set aside for combating terrorism and for financing projects to prevent violent extremism and part of the funding proposed for the United Nations Counter-Terrorism Centre over the coming five years. That will adversely affect efforts to combat terrorism.

It is therefore important to consider the best way to establish the proposed fund as quickly as possible. It is also important that States agree on its characteristics and look into the best ways to finance the fund without adversely affecting other efforts to combat terrorism and implement the United Nations Global Counter-Terrorism Strategy. Most of the recommendations presented by the Secretary-General rely on efforts at the regional and national levels The main reason for the failure to implement such measures has been the shortage or absence of the requisite funding. The Plan does not mention how to overcome that problem nor how to provide the necessary funding.

Paragraph 58, sub-paragraph (b), states that the prevention of violent extremism will be prioritized among the programmes implemented by United Nations entities, in cooperation with Member States, including by integrating the prevention of violent extremism into activities of United Nations peacekeeping operations. The Plan did not refer to the impact of such a decision on troop-contributing countries.

In conclusion, I would like to state that the goal is not to adopt or reject the Plan, but rather to carry out efforts on the ground to prevent violent extremism. That requires convincing everyone to abide by the Plan of Action, which will happen only if the views and proposals of States are taken into consideration while developing consensus, and that in turn requires ensuring the universality of implementation in accordance with international law and the principle of national ownership. We are therefore of the view that the review of the United Nations Global Counter-Terrorism Strategy is the optimal opportunity to take all such views into consideration without adversely affecting the measures contained in the Strategy. Otherwise, the Plan will not be universally accepted, which would preclude its implementation.

Mr. Al-Moumani (Jordan) (*spoke in Arabic*): At the outset, I would like to extend my thanks to the President for holding today's meeting on the Secretary-General's Plan of Action to Prevent Violent Extremism (A/70/674).

We welcome and support the adoption today of resolution 70/254 on the subject. We welcome the efforts undertaken by the Secretary-General in formulating the Plan of Action. We commend its flexible and practical approach, which emphasizes the important role played by the United Nations in combating the terrible phenomenon of violent extremism, the impacts of which are not confined to the maintenance of international peace and security but extend to all aspects of life. We are of the view that the Plan of Action is practical and prudent and will help to rally military and security support in the effort to combat terrorism.

The Plan of Action is an important set of guidelines that help States draft their own national plans or amend their already existing national plans in accordance with the exigencies of States' national interests and priorities in addressing local drivers of violent extremism. Combating extremism necessitates inclusive interactive approaches on the part of national institutions, balancing, inter alia, sociopolitical and educational perspectives. All the drivers and factors leading to violent extremism must be addressed.

Under the leadership of His Majesty King Abdullah II ibn Al Hussein, Jordan has launched numerous international initiatives to foster the values of tolerance, coexistence and dialogue, including the Amman Message on Islam, the Common Word initiative and the World Interfaith Harmony Week. Jordan has expressed its conviction that young people need to be the focus of the fight against terrorism and extremism. My country has taken the initiative on that point in the Security Council by holding, for the first time, an open debate on the role of youth in countering violent extremism and promoting peace, in April 2015 (see S/PV.7432). We also submitted a resolution on youth, peace and security, which was adopted last year (Security Council resolution 2250 (2015)).

I would like to make the following points regarding the Plan of Action. The primary responsibility for combating violent extremism rests with States, which will implement the Plan according to their national priorities, paying due attention to economic factors and sustainable development. The success of our efforts depends on taking bold approaches that avoid sectarian conflicts and close gaps. The continued Israeli-Palestinian conflict and the failure to achieve a just and permanent solution that fulfils the aspirations of the Palestinian people will undoubtedly lead to more violence and hatred. Furthermore, with regard to the Syrian crisis, terrorism and extremism will be curbed there when a political solution is reached. Extremism must not be linked to any specific faction, region or religion; linking it to Islam will only serve the interests of maverick terrorists.

With regard to funding the Plan of Action, the United Nations is a natural partner for assisting States in implementing their national plans. Mechanisms must be established to monitor the assistance extended by the United Nations. Jordan looks forward to discussing the Plan in detail at other forums in the future, including in Geneva, as well as during the biennial review of the United Nations Global Counter-Terrorism Strategy.

Mr. Mohamed (Sudan) (*spoke in Arabic*): The Sudan aligns itself with the statement made earlier by the representative of the Kingdom of Saudi Arabia on behalf of the members of the Organization of Islamic Cooperation. We would like to make the following statement in our national capacity.

My country commends the efforts of the President of the General Assembly and his Office to hold broad informal consultations with groups and countries, which led to today's consensus adoption of resolution 70/254. The resolution takes note of the Plan of Action submitted by the Secretary-General (A/70/674) and welcomes the Secretary-General's initiative in submitting it. The resolution also stresses the importance of giving further consideration to the Plan of Action during the consultations on the periodic review of the United Nations Global Counter-Terrorism Strategy next June and in other relevant forums, including the international conference to be convened by the Government of Switzerland in cooperation with the United Nations in Geneva in April.

The Sudan took a constructive in the informal consultations that preceded the consensus on resolution 70/254. We were committed to reaching that consensus on the resolution on the Plan of Action, which addresses an alarming phenomenon that spares no one, namely, violent extremism. In order to contribute to the dialogue on the Plan of Action that will take place over the next days and months, my delegation would like to make the following observations with respect to the Plan.

The Plan of Action stresses that the phenomenon of violent extremism lacks a clear and agreed definition. It cannot be associated with any religion, nationality, civilization or ethnic group, as stated in the preamble of the resolution adopted today. That is an essential point, one that we reiterate in order to avoid any stereotyping when talking about terrorism and violent extremism. It is not enough to refer to that point in the introduction of the Plan of Action. The Plan of Action should be consistent with that essential point, especially with regard to the conditions conducive to violent extremism. We should also avoid any potential contradiction between the notions of combating terrorism and violent extremism and avoiding overlapping or misunderstanding.

A comprehensive approach to the phenomenon of violent extremism is one of the most important tools for combating it. It is not useful to focus on the effects of the phenomenon; rather, we should address the root causes and main incubators through a comprehensive and balanced approach that does more than focus on the security and military aspects. Indeed, it should also take into account all cultural and social aspects of the phenomenon. In that regard, my country stresses that the General Assembly is well situated to deal with that phenomenon in all its aspects and dimensions.

Secondly, the Plan of Action is not balanced in the way it seeks to address the conditions conducive to violent extremism. It focuses extensively on national aspects through a limited approach that stresses mainly the issue of human rights without addressing other dimensions. The Plan also largely fails to refer to the conditions that lead to violent extremism at the international level, especially with regard to the denial of the rights to self-determination of people who are under the yoke of occupation. We cannot talk about violent extremism without mentioning foreign occupation, which is the main incubator of terrorism in all its forms and manifestations and of the violent extremism that leads to terrorism.

Thirdly, it might be useful to take note of the experience in preventing this phenomenon gained by countries that share a border with countries that might be suffering from that phenomenon. In that regard, we wish to point out the initiatives undertaken by the Sudanese Government to strengthen the culture of dialogue and moderation with a view to combating bigotry. The Government has also created certain institutions to address that issue.

Fourthly, the Plan of Action addresses the conditions conducive to violent extremism in a certain country. The Plan makes reference to a number of internal challenges that are important and essential in that regard. At the same time, however, the Plan fails to refer to external elements, especially interference in the internal affairs of States in a manner that runs counter to the provisions of the Charter of the United Nations and international law in order to serve certain political interests. Such interference threatens the stability, unity and territorial integrity of the affected States and disrupts their welfare and development. Unilateral sanctions are also one of the aspects that threaten international peace and security and lead to international tension.

The Plan of Action addresses an important problem that demands concerted international efforts in order to combat that phenomenon. The Plan of Action should not refer to any elements that do not enjoy consensus and that might lead to disagreement and might distract Member States from their main task. Therefore, my delegation expresses its concern over the reference in of paragraph 50, sub-paragraph (e), to the International Criminal Court. The international community should support efforts aimed at ensuring accountability in cases where national measures cannot adequately address grave violations, including through the referral by the Security Council of cases to the International Criminal Court or to an ad hoc tribunal.

Members are well aware of the politicized relationship between the Security Council and the International Criminal Court. The Sudan believes that, owing to those paragraphs, the Plan of Action could lead to political disagreement and run counter to the aim of concerted international efforts to combat the phenomenon of violent extremism. That also applies to paragraph 58, sub-paragraph (b), which calls for integrating the prevention of violent extremism into the mandates of special political missions and peacekeeping operations and the activities of the United Nations country teams. That reference gives rise to a number of questions and concerns. It is inadvisable for the Plan of Action to include references that run counter to the international consensus on combatting violent extremism and terrorism in all their forms and manifestations.

Resolution 70/254, which the Assembly adopted today, stresses that the international community stands united in combatting violent extremism. It also stresses the importance of continued objective dialogue aimed at addressing the shortcomings of the Plan of Action and at building on its positive elements. My country would like to reiterate its readiness to engage constructively and positively in the deliberations on the Plan of Action in various forums. We look forward to a world of peace, security, stability and respect for the Charter and international law and without interference in the internal affairs of States through an international political and economic order characterized by justice, transparency and impartiality — a system that seeks to achieve prosperity and development for all the nations of the world.

Ms. Lehto (Finland): Finland aligns itself with the statement made earlier by the observer of the European Union.

Finland warmly welcomes the Secretary-General's Plan of Action to Prevent Violent Extremism (A/70/674) and the adoption of resolution 70/254.

Violent extremism is not a new phenomenon, and we have been working to counter it for decades. However, violent extremism has increased rapidly in recent years, and alarming new forms have developed. Moreover, it has become evident that security-based counter-terrorism measures alone are not sufficient and need to be complemented by a more comprehensive approach.

We need to send a clear and unified signal to the world that violent extremism is not acceptable and that the international community is taking the threat seriously. Moreover, we need to widen and deepen our cooperation further, with more emphasis on prevention. Prevention should be used as a proactive approach with real potential both for addressing immediate security concerns, such as recruitment by extremist groups, and for achieving sustainable long-term results.

It is clearly preferable, and certainly more cost-effective, to prevent violent extremism than to be forced to address its many adverse consequences. But to succeed, that requires a concerted, multidisciplinary effort at all levels — local, national, regional and international. The Secretary-General's Plan of Action is an important and timely step forward. We should be ready to move towards its implementation.

Finland has had a national action plan on preventing violent extremism since 2012. The plan is currently being updated through wide consultation with stakeholders. I would like to take this opportunity to share briefly with the Assembly some of our own experiences and provide a few concrete examples.

Finland's national prevention measures are based on a comprehensive and inclusive approach. Violent extremism has a tendency to reinforce itself, and its various forms feed each other. If we concentrate on preventing only one form, there will be room for other types and other groups to grow. This approach is also aimed at gaining wide support and acceptance for the measures among various communities. It is extremely important to have broad cooperation among the various authorities, organizations and communities. We have created several models in which various actors work together.

First, our "net tip" system enables the public to submit non-emergency information to law enforcement authorities about any suspicious material found on the Internet. In addition, we will be creating a national help-line service, targeting families whose members are planning to leave for conflict areas or have already done so. Our Information House seminars provide training for local-level actors, such as schools and social workers, in identifying cases where people may be planning to leave for conflict areas and enabling such actors to intervene, in cooperation with other authorities.

I would also like to mention the so-called anchor model, in which multidisciplinary professional teams work with vulnerable young people who are at risk of committing crimes and direct them to the appropriate services. The teams consist of police officers, social workers, mental health professionals and youth workers.

Finally, we have the exit model, based on a concept developed by non-governmental organizations (NGOs) to deal with individuals who are planning to leave for conflict areas, have already travelled to them or have recently returned to Finland. It will work in parallel with the anchor model and is designed to be applicable to all forms of violent extremism.

The role of young people in the prevention of violent extremism is essential. Young people have to be more aware and better prepared to recognize and reject propaganda and attempts to provoke them to violence. A key element in achieving that goal is to improve young people's integration into society, recognizing them as relevant actors and decision-makers and giving them a role in preventing violent extremism. Education plays a crucial role in developing a sense of civic responsibility and intercultural understanding and is yet another facet of the inclusive approach. In October, Finland's Ministry for Foreign Affairs and the Young Muslims Association organized a joint round table on Finnish foreign policy relating to conflict areas, human rights and democracy. Our Minister for Foreign Affairs opened the discussion, and I am happy to say that the response to the event was very positive and highly encouraging.

Religious communities can also play a significant role in preventing violent extremism. Our Government cooperates with Finn Church Aid, a Finnish NGO with great experience in peacebuilding work in conflict areas, in order to involve religious communities and otherwise utilize its expertise domestically. Religious communities in Finland are currently creating a so-called shoulder-to-shoulder approach designed to help them support one another in concrete situations where a group is under threat or has become the target of hate crimes. Finland is also a founder of and the main donor to the global Network for Religious and Traditional Peacemakers, which seeks to improve mediation efforts by supporting the positive role of religious and traditional leaders.

Research shows that there is a correlation between gender equality and a decrease in violent extremism. Societies that are relatively gender-equal are less prone than others to violent extremism. Empowering women and ensuring their full participation in decision-making are therefore essential building blocks in efforts to counter violent extremism.

The prevention of violent extremism is not a unique or isolated project but should be seen as an integral part of the everyday work and activities of a wide range of actors. The importance of working together cooperatively cannot be overstated, and that applies at the international, regional and national levels, as well as among all relevant authorities, organizations and communities. A comprehensive and inclusive approach seeks to ensure both the effectiveness and the broad acceptance of the measures chosen.

I would like to conclude with a reference to a recently published joint opinion piece by the Foreign Ministers of Finland and Sweden, in which they write about mediation as an effective way to prevent conflicts. It is far less costly, they said, than trying to fix something that is already broken; it safeguards development gains and, most importantly, it saves lives. The same can be said about the prevention of violent extremism.

Mr. Rycroft (United Kingdom): The United Kingdom strongly endorses, supports and welcomes the Secretary-General's Plan of Action for Preventing Violent Extremism (A/70/674).

In welcoming that initiative today, the General Assembly has declared with one voice that we stand united — united against violent extremism, united in defiance of its hatred and united in solidarity with its victims. We have all shared the sorrow, anger and pain that the actions of groups such as Da'esh, Al-Qaida and Boko Haram have brought. The Plan of Action that the Secretary-General has presented is pragmatic, comprehensive and flexible enough to adapt to the evolving threat. It offers Member States and the entire United Nations system a strong foundation for better coordination, and it contains recommendations for action that we must all consider. I would particularly like to draw attention to its call for robust national action plans, designed in consultation with civil society and communities and founded on respect for human rights and the rule of law. If we are to succeed, all States must act on that concrete recommendation in their different ways.

The United Kingdom looks forward to contributing our experience and analysis gained in tackling the threat and its root causes and to learning from others. Our national approach centres on partnerships — with faith communities and others, civil society, the private sector, young people and other individuals. We do that across the whole of Government, including front-line agencies, because violent extremism is too complex a challenge for any single body to solve. Everything we do, domestically or internationally, is calibrated to support that agenda. But of course every Member State has its own unique circumstances and solutions to the challenges of violent extremism. So let us all share our experiences in a spirit of dialogue, and in turn learn from best practices elsewhere.

Today is just the beginning of that conversation, and we are hearing some different points of view. I welcome that. Debate is healthy, and this is a complex issue. The United Kingdom looks forward to continuing the discussion in the coming weeks. The conference announced by our Swiss colleague on preventing violent extremism, which is to be held in Geneva in April, is an excellent opportunity to pursue the debate, and we hope for full attendance.

But as we exchange views, we should be mindful of the fact that the terrorists and extremists are also watching and listening to us. They need to know that today we have shown our determination to take action. We have shown that what unites us against their threat far outweighs that which divides us. And by focusing on the root causes of terrorist violence, we prove our commitment to preventing, and not just countering, that threat.

Ms. Lodhi (Pakistan): We would like to thank the President for convening today's debate, which affords Member States the opportunity to express their views on the Secretary-General's Plan of Action to Prevent Violent Extremism (A/70/674). We welcome the Secretary-General's initiative and believe that we can best address violent extremism and develop effective responses by taking into account the views and experiences of Member States.

Pakistan fully aligns itself with the statement delivered earlier by the Permanent Representative of Saudi Arabia on behalf of the Organization of Islamic Cooperation.

Pakistan reiterates its principled position against terrorism in all its forms and manifestations. We also endorse the view expressed by the Secretary-General that violent extremism is an affront to the purposes and principles of the United Nations. At the same time, we believe that a lack of respect for the fundamental principles of the Charter of the United Nations and a willingness to violate them can also lead to violent extremism. There is no agreed definition of violent extremism, just as there is none for terrorism.

The conditions under which violent extremism can morph into terrorism are also open to different interpretations, and that warrants assessment of the phenomenon in broader and more considered terms. We all agree that violent extremism and terrorism should not be associated with any country, race, religion, culture or nationality. We deplore any attempt to do so and urge the international community to ensure that that understanding is fully reflected in its members' national and international actions.

Pakistan has consistently called on the international community to address the root causes of terrorism and the conditions and breeding grounds that give rise to it. We have also always urged that respect for human rights and the rule of law be maintained in efforts to counter terrorism, so that such efforts do not prove counterproductive. That is why we have consistently stressed a balanced implementation of the United Nations Global Counter-Terrorism Strategy (resolution 60/288), including its pillars I and IV. We are pleased to note that the international community is finally acknowledging the need to go beyond security- and military-centred counter-terrorism measures and to adopt a more comprehensive approach. That is something that Pakistan has long advocated, since it ensures that the underlying factors that drive terrorist violence can be addressed in their entirety. We are therefore surprised and dismayed that relatively little attention has been given to some of the most obvious international factors that have so decisively influenced the emergence of violent extremism.

If we are to find effective ways to prevent violent extremism, we must objectively analyse its full range. Flawed and partial assessments will lead only to flawed approaches. If we are to deal with it comprehensively, we must fully comprehend and recognize both local and external drivers. Often it is the confluence of and the interplay among those drivers that lead to violent extremism. Moreover, in today's globalized and interconnected world, we can hardly separate violent extremism's local and international contexts and dimensions. Economic deprivation, political injustice, social exclusion and the marginalization of people must be addressed in a wider international context as well as a local one.

Injustices done to peoples under foreign occupation, the denial of the right to self-determination, long-festering and unresolved international disputes, interference in States' internal affairs and continued violations of the principles of the Charter create conditions that violent extremists and terrorists exploit in order to propagate their twisted ideologies. The international community, and the United Nations in particular, already has a responsibility to address those issues. Doing so diligently will also help to address the drivers of violent extremism and the conditions conducive to terrorism.

Regarding the human-rights-based approach to preventing violent extremism, Pakistan regrets that a number of significant and relevant elements have been either ignored or given too little consideration. Negative stereotyping, stigmatization, discrimination and intolerance must all be countered if we are to prevent violent extremism. Effective implementation of Human Rights Council resolution 16/18 is important to the prevention of radicalization. Its violation nourishes the narrative that violent extremists use to justify their vile acts. Xenophobia, in particular Islamophobia, is on the rise in the West. It has so far gone unchecked. It is unfortunate that unprincipled, xenophobic politicians have sought to build their political fortunes by spreading fear and deliberate mischaracterizations of people of other faiths or cultures. That, too, fuels the process of radicalization.

We fully subscribe to the need to ensure respect for international law and human rights in counter-terrorism measures. That is what all of us committed to when we endorsed the Global Counter-Terrorism Strategy. But what do we make of the foreign military interventions that have rendered not just societies but entire countries and regions susceptible to the chaos in which violent extremism thrives and grows? Do we realize the impact of the so-called surgical counter-terrorism strikes that violate States' territorial integrity and that have resulted in thousands of civilian casualties and left entire communities angry and determined to avenge such impunity? The fact is that 15 years after we committed to making the world more peaceful and terror-free, it has become a much more dangerous place. We must revisit the response that was used to counter terrorism and violent extremism and that has yielded this sorry outcome.

With regard to the Secretary-General's call for national action plans to prevent violent extremism, I can report that my country has already initiated a number of steps towards curbing that threat at the national, regional and international levels. Eight of the 20 action points of Pakistan's national plan for countering terrorist violence pertain to preventing violent extremism. We are fully cognizant of our national challenges and are making focused efforts to undertake educational reforms, prevent misuse of the Internet and social media, promote tolerance and reform our criminal justice system.

My Government has focused on the potential of young people in particular. The Prime Minister's youth programme is geared to providing educational scholarships, vocational training and skills development, as well as loans to young entrepreneurs. We are also partnering with the United Nations in a skills-development and engagement programme for youth, aimed at preventing violent extremism. Pakistan has led a number of initiatives promoting interfaith and intercultural harmony. Just a week ago, during World Interfaith Harmony Week, we organized a side event at the United Nations on countering xenophobia, inviting a number of scholars of different faiths, who presented their successful initiatives on building interfaith harmony.

At the international level, we remain committed to supporting all efforts aimed at preventing violent extremism and terrorism in a balanced manner, consistent with the purposes and principles of the United Nations. Finally, I would like to say that the international community must meet this difficult challenge in a coordinated and unified manner, taking into account the views of all Member States.

Mr. Çevik (Turkey): Violent extremism is a major concern for the international community, including Turkey. The most recent General Assembly resolution on the United Nations Global Counter-Terrorism Strategy Review (resolution 66/282), facilitated by Turkey, urges all Member States to unite against violent extremism in all its forms and manifestations.

There is no question that security measures based on the rule of law, such as the interception, deterrence and prosecution of terrorists, remain the fundamental pillar of counter-terrorism efforts. However, we are also convinced that a broader approach is necessary, if we are to prevent young people from being attracted to terrorist groups, make our societies more resilient in the face of extremist narratives and rehabilitate radicalized individuals. Turkey therefore fully supports the view of the Secretary-General that the international community should adopt a comprehensive approach, encompassing not only security-based measures but also systematic ones that address the drivers of violent extremism at the local, regional and global levels.

As the guardian of universal ideals and concerted international action, the United Nations should play a crucial role in leading the efforts to address such drivers at the global level, laying out basic principles and assisting Member States in designing and implementing their national strategies. In that regard, Turkey welcomes the Secretary-General's Plan of Action to Prevent Violent Extremism (A/70/674). As we underlined at the briefing on 15 January, we believe the Plan of Action will be an important reference document.

Turkey, along with the Netherlands, is co-chairing the Global Counterterrorism Forum and actively contributes to its efforts within our Organization. In that regard, I should point to the Forum's Ankara Memorandum on Good Practices for a Multi-Sectoral Approach to Countering Violent Extremism. Together with the United States, Turkey is also leading an initiative within the Forum aimed at addressing the life cycle of radicalization.

I would like to emphasize the fact that radicalization to violence is not limited to a specific ideology or belief system and cannot be associated with any country, religion or culture. It takes different forms, all of which must be addressed with equal determination. The United Nations is best placed to ensure a balanced and comprehensive approach to the issue. It is important to accurately diagnose the drivers of radicalization if we are to produce effective policies to address them.

We are concerned about the rising levels of intolerance, discrimination and stigmatization on the basis of faith and ethnicity. Such attitudes aggravate marginalization and alienation, thereby providing terrorist groups with new areas to exploit. We need to take a resolute stance, if we are to cut off that vicious cycle.

My Government is ready to fully support the Secretary-General's efforts. We will actively contribute to the ensuing discussions, beginning with the Global Counter-Terrorism Strategy Review.

Mr. Menkveld (Netherlands): At the outset, let me say that the Netherlands aligns itself with the statement delivered earlier on behalf of the European Union and its member States.

The Netherlands supports the Secretary-General's Plan of Action to Prevent Violent Extremism (A/70/674) and welcomes the Assembly's adoption this morning of resolution 70/254. As Mr. Albert Koenders, the Minister for Foreign Affairs of the Kingdom of the Netherlands, said during his briefing to the United Nations Group of Friends against Terrorism last month, "Terrorism today is a multi-headed monster. Terrorists are ruthless, resourceful and skilled at reinvention." The Plan of Action that we are discussing today will enable the international community to be equally ruthless, resourceful and skilled in preventing the phenomenon.

The Netherlands believes that international cooperation is key to preventing violent extremism. Countries must look beyond national borders and stay ahead of the curve together. Through its international efforts, the Netherlands reaches out to its allies and partners in order to build capacities and share best practices. As Co-Chair with Turkey of the Global Counterterrorism Forum, we promote further international cooperation through that important multilateral platform, which works closely with various relevant United Nations agencies. With a working group that focuses on the prevention of violent extremism and through the related Hedayah International Centre of Excellence for Countering Violent Extremism, in Abu Dhabi, the Global Counterterrorism Forum is well positioned to mobilize expertise on extremism, work on international coherence and provide best practices and tools for implementing the Plan of Action. The same goes for initiatives such as the Global Community Engagement and Resilience Fund.

Nationally as well as internationally, the Netherlands focuses on identifying and tackling the root causes of radicalization. Within the framework of our comprehensive national action programme for preventing violent extremism, at the local level we maintain intensive and long-lasting contacts with community and religious leaders, police officers, teachers and social workers who work on a daily basis with youngsters who may become radicalized. Although the strategy has proved useful, the number of Dutch foreign terrorist fighters travelling abroad is still rising every month, which is worrying. It is therefore important that we continue to combine our national efforts to prevent violent extremism with international cooperation. The crucial factor is mutual trust. Do we trust each other enough? Do we share enough information? And are we truly willing to work together even more closely to prevent violent extremism?

Prevention is better than taking action after the event. Stopping today's radicals from becoming tomorrow's terrorists can succeed only if we take action both nationally and internationally. The Netherlands is looking forward to seeing the Plan of Action implemented by the United Nations and its Member States, and to engaging in further discussions on the subject in the context of the Geneva conference in April and the tenth anniversary Review of the United Nations Global Counter-Terrorism Strategy in June.

I asked just now if we were truly willing to work together. Well, the Kingdom of the Netherlands stands ready to intensify its efforts to work with the United Nations and other Member States to prevent the multi-headed monster that we call terrorism from striking.

Mr. Heumann (Israel): I would like to thank the President of the General Assembly for convening today's debate on an important issue. I also wish to express my thanks to the Secretary-General for his Plan of Action to Prevent Violent Extremism (A/70/674) and our appreciation for the hard work of the President's Office, which has enabled us to adopt today's resolution 70/254 on the Plan of Action by consensus and thus send an important message from this Hall.

When our children are not safe in their schools and our families are not safe in their homes, then we, as an international community, have failed. We have failed to stand up to terrorism, failed to resist those who spread hatred and failed to fight back. No country is safe today, and no continent is immune to the horrific consequences. Today, violent extremist ideologies drive the most brutal and violent terror attacks that we have ever seen. The emerging stories shock the conscience of humankind. At the same time, the flow of foreign fighters to such terror organizations remains strong, with more civilians being radicalized and recruited every day.

When analysing the issue of violent extremism, we often hear that poverty, unemployment and marginalization drive people to become terrorists. Those are indeed core factors. But we must not ignore the fact that some terrorists also come from prosperous families, live in countries with open and equitable societies and enjoy the full benefits of a university education.

So while social and economic factors are important considerations, we must not delude ourselves. Young people from all walks of life and all environments are being drawn to violent extremism. If we are not clear about what drives that process, we will not be able to overcome it. And here we must be clear — the real and most basic threat we face is extremist ideology itself. Therefore, if we truly want to defeat violent extremism and terrorism, we must attack radical extremist ideology at its source. It is the ideological core that spurs terrorism, emboldens its sponsors and motivates terrorist recruitment, operations and growth. Today, we acknowledge that the prime driving forces behind the ideology of violent extremism are incitement and indoctrination. We see youth being brainwashed — lured by manipulative leaders to a life of extremism that sanctifies death instead of life.

Efforts to counter incitement and radicalization are among the most effective tools at our disposal. We must promote education that teaches peace instead of hate, tolerance instead of violence, and mutual understanding instead of martyrdom. Community leaders and cultural, religious and political figures play a crucial role in promoting counter-radicalization efforts. We must make every effort to ensure that the key voices of moderation are heard, and that they defeat the forces of extremism.

Unfortunately, in Israel the threat of terrorism is all too real. For decades, Israel has been at the forefront of confronting terror and radical ideology. Over the course of the past few months alone, 30 Israelis have been killed by terrorists, and over 300 have been injured in hundreds of attacks. Israel has long understood that in order to counter terrorism, we also have to counter violent extremism, and that is an integral component of our national counter-terrorism strategy. We have supported organizations that build bridges between citizens of different religions and beliefs through educational, cross-cultural and interfaith meetings. We believe that tolerance and understanding of the other are the best way to defeat extremism and radicalism.

Israel welcomes the Secretary-General's Plan of Action. It is Israel's strong conviction that only a unified and proactive stance will enable us to get ahead of the phenomenon of violent extremism, mitigate the next wave of foreign terrorist fighter recruits and prevent the horror attacks of tomorrow. At the same time, the implementation of the Plan must be done in concert with, and not in place of, our ongoing counter-terrorism measures.

Our final point is that just as violent extremism knows no boundaries, so too must our efforts be united in order to prevent it. We must not allow excuses for terror — no ifs, ands or buts. Terror is terror is terror. The Secretary-General's Plan offers an opportunity for cooperation, but we must avoid detracting from its promise. Some in this Hall seek to infuse politicization into this discussion, but that background noise must not be allowed to hijack this important topic. The goal of countering terrorism is simply too important. Now, more than ever, as violent extremism tears our world apart, it is imperative that we stand together. It is imperative that we not use the fight against terrorism as a camouflage to single out one country and score cheap political points. That will lead these discussions to a gridlock.

The State of Israel stands ready and willing to play an active role in the crucial endeavour.

Mrs. Nusseibeh (United Arab Emirates) (*spoke in Arabic*): At the outset, I would like to state my delegation's support for the statement made earlier on behalf of the Organization of Islamic Cooperation. I also wish to thank the Secretary-General for his important initiative.

I welcome the adoption of resolution 70/254, which takes note of the Secretary-General's Plan of Action to Prevent Violent Extremism (A/70/674). Today, we are facing a grave challenge to international peace and security, which is also undermining our efforts to achieve the Sustainable Development Goals. Increasingly, as we push back against extremists in particular countries, they lash out elsewhere. Our challenge further increases with our inability to reach a precise definition of extremism, which has no specific religion, nationality or culture. The manner in which some extremist groups affiliate Islam with their destructive actions is a serious offense to a religion that is compassionate in nature. Furthermore, the individuals recruited, in particular by the Islamic State in Iraq and the Sham (ISIS, to abuse Islam's name have done so in an attempt to justify their extremist ideas and criminal acts.

The Secretary-General notes in his report on the Plan of Action that extremism does not arise in a vacuum. There are incentives that drive people towards extremism, such as conflicts, civil wars and human rights abuses. In addition, the proxy war that some countries are waging to achieve their despicable plans further aggravates the situation. That requires us to work together to help countries resolve their differences and halt the threat of extremism. The Plan of Action needs to address other factors that propel extremism, most notably foreign occupation and State terrorism. The Plan must also address the issue of accountability for States that compromise the principles of sovereignty and non-interference in the internal affairs of States.

The United Arab Emirates supports, as a priority, the Secretary-General's call for the development of regional plans to prevent extremism. We would like to emphasize the following points. The first concerns the promotion of good governance and the rule of law. My country has enacted a number of laws to ensure that the issue of extremism is addressed through the rule of law. Secondly, with regard to the inclusion of local communities and the countering of hate narratives, the United Arab Emirates supports the Secretary-General's initiative to promote the participation of youth in society. There are 1.8 billion young people in Arab societies. They make up more than half of the population. The United Arab Emirates has integrated its own youth into decision-making processes and the prevention of extremism, inter alia by recently appointing a 22-year-old female minister to preside over the United Arab Emirates International Youth Council.

My country has supported the appointment of Emirati women to leading roles in all fields. That can be seen in the recent appointment of the first Arab woman leader of a parliamentary national assembly. The United Arab Emirates also supported Security Council resolution 2242 (2015), which stresses the importance of women's participation in the maintenance of international peace and security, and we have supported the project carried out in collaboration with the United Nations Entity for Gender Equality and the Empowerment of Women on countering violent terrorism.

We support the Plan of Action's emphasis on promoting dialogue and engaging religious leaders in the promotion of the values of peace. In the United Arab Emirates, the Muslim Council of Elders in Abu Dhabi is working to unify efforts to eliminate extremist messages that threaten human values and the principles of Islam.

The conquest of extremism requires long-term strategies aimed at winning the war of ideas, especially in the social media, which have been used to spread extremist ideas. Therefore, the United Arab Emirates is working through international centres of excellence for countering violent extremism to expose messages from extremist groups. One such centre was launched by the United Arab Emirates in cooperation with the United States.

There is a need for regional plans of action to prevent extremism, which does not respect borders, as mentioned by the Secretary-General. The United Arab Emirates has joined 33 other Islamic countries in the first Islamic coalition against terrorism, led by the Kingdom of Saudi Arabia, to eliminate extremist ideas and preserve Islam.

The United Arab Emirates strongly believes that the Secretary-General's initiative should serve as a blueprint for coordinating all efforts to combat extremism. It supports the existing mechanisms, including the important work of the United Nations Counter-Terrorism Centre, the enhancement of which was graciously made possible by the Kingdom of Saudi Arabia. The United Arab Emirates also believes that a plan to that effect should be evaluated and approved during the review of the United Nations Global Counter-Terrorism Strategy in June. That would help us in our efforts to seek new ways to curb extremism, as the existing tools, such as United Nations Security Council sanctions, are not effective.

We believe that the road to prosperity and lasting peace lies in the promotion of tolerance and pluralism. We confirm our commitment to supporting our partners in their fight against extremist groups wherever they may be. Our responsibility towards others is part of our obligation as a member of the Islamic nation and of humankind at large.

Ms. Vraila (Greece): I wish to thank the President for organizing this timely and important debate on the prevention of violent extremism. We believe that it provides a really good opportunity to exchange views on promoting our overall response to that alarming phenomenon.

Greece aligns itself with the statement delivered earlier by the observer of the European Union and wishes to add the following from a national point of view.

We welcome the Secretary-General's Plan of Action to Prevent Violent Extremism (A/70/674), a timely initiative that provides useful guidance to Member States in their efforts to adopt effective and inclusive policies to face that complex challenge. Violent extremism is a continuously evolving global threat, neither constrained by borders nor limited to any single ideology. It requires concerted action and a comprehensive response. We need a holistic, firm, multifaceted and multidisciplinary approach that will also focus on the conditions conducive to the spread of extremist ideology.

Prevention is an essential element in our strategy and must be a priority, as clearly envisaged in the United

Nations Global Counter-Terrorism Strategy. We need to focus on prevention through effective means, as well as on building inclusive and accountable institutions and Government practices. That is, of course, a challenging endeavour, requiring a combination of measures derived from various disciplines and involving working beyond Governments by engaging local communities, religious leaders and civil society. One of its most important aspects is the need to address the radicalization that leads to terrorism and the spread of violent extremism through the Internet.

We recognize the central role of youth in our comprehensive approach to counter this fast-evolving challenge. Younger generations are our future and are therefore the key to our success. They are the main targets of terrorist and extremist propaganda. Extremists keep finding new ways of engaging with youth through networking sites, online video channels and radical chat rooms, and they have succeeded in spreading their propaganda very widely, rapidly and effectively. We must build on the potential of young people and empower them to achieve their ambitions through quality education, proper job opportunities and a decent living. Enhancing the values of coexistence, respect for diversity and the rejection of violence will render societies immune to hate-based ideologies.

Debates in the General Assembly and the Security Council and the relevant resolutions have underlined the importance that the international community attaches to addressing conditions and factors leading to the rise of radicalization, violence and violent extremism among youth. To strengthen preventive and proactive action, education is an important factor. Education can promote open-mindedness and tolerance, respect for human rights and the rule of law.

Women and girls are frequent targets of radical ideologies and terrorism. In the fight against violent extremism, the role played by the empowerment of women is of major importance. Engaging women as credible messengers of counter-narratives against violent extremism could prove instrumental in the implementation of policies aimed at reducing the appeal of radicalization.

In the turbulent new international landscape, respect for the other, tolerance for the different, and the quest to find unity in diversity are a central message to be promoted. The extremists perpetrate crimes against humanity, destroy centuries-old religious and historic monuments and undermine the foundations of peaceful and democratic societies. Our duty is to protect human rights and freedoms and the multicultural and multireligious nature of societies.

It is in that contex,t and subsequent to the international conference organized in Athens in October 2015 on religious and cultural pluralism and peaceful coexistence in the Middle East, that Greece is founding a centre/observatory for religious pluralism in the Middle East and the Mediterranean. It will be a forum for interreligious dialogue and will encourage interaction between political and religious leaders, the academic community and non-governmental organizations aimed at identifying problems affecting the freedom of religion or belief and cultural pluralism in the region.

The fight against violent extremism becomes crucial in efforts to protect the multi-ethnic and multiconfessional nature of societies. Short-sighted policies based on xenophobia, exclusion and unilateralism and a single-minded focus on security are bound to undermine our efforts to effectively address the sources of the phenomenon of violence, including violent extremism.

The United Nations, in making full use of its agencies and toolkit, is the international institution best positioned to effectively mainstream efforts, create the basis for a more strategic vision and encourage long-term and sustainable engagement at national levels. Member States should actively engage in order to ensure the success of this process.

Mr. De Aguiar Patriota (Brazil): Allow me to start by thanking the President for providing us with an opportunity to start exchanging views on the Plan of Action to Prevent Violent Extremism (A/70/674) presented last month by the Secretary-General. I would also like to reiterate Brazil's appreciation for the Secretary-General's leadership on that issue. The Plan of Action illustrates his genuine commitment to addressing, in a balanced manner, one of the most pressing challenges of our time.

Before addressing specific elements of the Plan of Action, I would like to make some observations of a conceptual nature. Brazil welcomes the assertion in the Plan of Action that it applies only to violent extremism as and when conducive to terrorism. We also note with appreciation that that very expression was incorporated into resolution 70/254, which was just adopted.

That conceptual precision is not a minor one, since terrorism and violent extremism are not synonymous nor automatically correlated. Racism, xenophobia and homophobia, for example, can lead to expressions of violent extremism, which are heinous in themselves, but not necessarily related to the commission of terrorist acts. And the strategies that are needed to overcome the former are different from those appropriate to efforts to counter terrorism.

In that regard, Brazil fully endorses the Secretary-General's assessment that conflating the concepts of terrorism and violent extremism "may lead to the justification of an overly broad application of counter-terrorism measures, including against forms of conduct that should not qualify as terrorist acts" (*A/70/674, para. 4*).

We still lack, however, a precise consensus definition of violent extremism and its relationship with terrorism. We must therefore guard against abuses, including to human rights, that might arise owing to that legal gap.

Based on the commitment to make prevention work, the Plan of Action can be considered a welcome counterweight to the emphasis on military approaches witnessed during the first 15 years of the twenty-first century. It is also in line with our joint efforts to enhance the effectiveness of the United Nations in terms of prevention, as demonstrated by the simultaneously ongoing review processes on peace operations, the peacebuilding architecture, and women and peace and security. Brazil is pleased to acknowledge that the very title of the Plan of Action reflects the centrality of prevention.

Violent extremism conducive to terrorism can be effectively countered only with an approach that takes into consideration the underlying causes of such extremism. Legitimate grievances that push individuals towards radicalism need to be understood and tackled. Intolerance leading to terrorist acts is more likely to thrive where social, political, economic or cultural exclusion has taken root. While it would be erroneous to establish an automatic chain of causality between poverty and violent extremism conducive to terrorism, it is possible to state that people are less susceptible to radicalism in inclusive societies. As recognized by the Secretary-General, vulnerability to extremist narratives is frequently related to the erosion of an individual's prospects — especially those of younger people — owing to marginalization and unemployment.

The United Nations can play a more effective role in fostering prevention. It is regrettable that the Organization's capacity to achieve progress in that regard has been severely limited by its current budgetary practices. The promotion of development and human rights — which recognizably contribute to prevention — is underfunded, while the bulk of available resources go to responding to peace and security challenges stemming from often-preventable conflicts.

Not a single country is immune to violent extremism conducive to terrorism, regardless of its size and resources. Foreign terrorist fighters have been recruited in prosperous societies. As was rightly assessed by the Secretary-General, the phenomenon cannot be explained solely by a lack of access to economic opportunity. Terrorist groups such as Da'esh have been attracting recruits by offering them a sense of purpose, belonging and identity that they have failed to acquire elsewhere. Genuinely combating exclusion — in law as well as in practice — can go a long way towards neutralizing extremist narratives and ensuring that our societies develop resilience to radicalization.

Discriminatory laws, especially those enabling population profiling, are inconsistent with respect for diversity and the acknowledgment of our common humanity. Brazil has learned that promoting inclusiveness requires active outreach on the part of the State to the most fragile, vulnerable or remote populations in our territory in order to provide them with access to justice and to basic services.

In his recommendations to Member States, the Secretary-General rightly attributes relevance to fighting exclusion. Brazil is convinced that another critical element to be incorporated in our strategy to prevent violent extremism is to address the refugee crisis. We cannot turn a blind eye to those who have had to flee their home countries to survive conflict. Societies that have been demonstrating solidarity towards refugees are contributing significantly to tackling a major driver of that phenomenon. As pointed out by former United Nations High Commissioner for Refugees António Guterres, a world that rejects refugees would provide extremists with the best propaganda tool that they could wish for in the recruitment of new supporters, including inside the very countries that seek to close their borders to refugees. In other words, it is inconsistent to uphold the notion of a collective responsibility to protect civilians in situations of conflict and then turn one's back on the very civilians fleeing conflict when they knock on your door.

The Secretary-General is correct in stressing that conformity with international law is a prerequisite for the effectiveness of our efforts against terrorism and violent extremism. If measures are implemented in violation of the Charter of the United Nations or other bodies of international law — including human rights, humanitarian and refugee laws — their legitimacy will have been compromised, rendering them counterproductive. Terrorist groups aim to provoke Governments into overreaction so as to explore the narratives of abuse and oppression. Unfortunately, many are falling into their trap.

The use of the Internet and social media by terrorist organizations illustrates the evolving nature of the challenge that we are facing. Having been conceived to bring people together, those platforms are now also being used to incite hatred and promote terrorist recruitment. While acting against that sort of misuse, we must simultaneously guard against transgressions of the freedom of expression and the right to privacy. We should simultaneously foster digital inclusion, since the Internet and social media are powerful tools for channelling messages of respect and dialogue.

The Secretary-General is also correct in his diagnosis that protracted and unresolved conflicts often lie at the root of violent extremism. We regret that the Plan of Action does not sufficiently address the international community's responsibility to solve conflicts in accordance with the Charter of the United Nations. We should not underestimate the recruitment power engendered by a sense of oppression and exclusion triggered by foreign occupation in particular. The dissemination of violent extremism cannot be dissociated from our collective failure to deal with ongoing crises in the Middle East, especially the Israel-Palestine conflict. Our strategy to prevent violent extremism must include a call for efforts to bring peace founded on justice to conflicts that directly or indirectly fuel terrorist agendas. The Security Council has yet to live up to its responsibilities in that regard.

Today's meeting represents the beginning of a debate on the recommendations presented by the Secretary-General and other Member States with regard to how to prevent violent extremism. We look forward to further discussing those issues in the Geneva conference in April and during the review of the Global Counter-Terrorism Strategy in June.

Mr. Akbaruddin (India): Let me at the outset thank the President for organizing this debate on the Secretary-General's report on the Plan of Action to Prevent Violent Extremism, contained in document A/70/674. My delegation welcomes the opportunity to focus on the pandemic that goes by the name of violent extremism. This modern-day plague is destroying societies, haemorrhaging communities and disrupting State structures. From regions in conflict to the streets of distant cities, it is extracting a deadly price. At this stage, we would like to offer our remarks outlining our approach to the issue, even as we await a detailed discussion on the subject.

First, the report adopts a sagacious approach by not attempting to enter into the divisive minefield of defining the phenomenon that goes by the name of violent extremism. We in the General Assembly would once again have been subjected to theological debates, even though the need now is for action. The approach of indicating pathways to address the problems with the best tools that we have, rather than going down the route of definition, has our support.

Secondly, given the variety of social, political, economic, psychological and cultural factors in play, there can obviously be multiple pathways leading to the growth of violent extremism. Hence, the interconnectedness between security and development as a central philosophical tenet of the approach outlined in the Plan of Action is understandable. That also augurs well for a role for the United Nations, which has long experience in stringing together intersectoral partnerships to address multidimensional issues through potentially multiple routes. However, we feel that the Plan of Action is full of prescriptions to Member States, but it is low on what the United Nations will do to assist Member States in this venture.

We acknowledge that addressing this malaise is primarily the responsibility of Member States, and many are already confronting the problem as best as they can. Nevertheless, we need substantive value-addition from the United Nations in the endeavour. Even more important than what we face is how we can respond to the threat. What we are tackling is not merely a local contagion that can be addressed unilaterally; it is a global contagion. Global links, franchise relations, homegrown terrorism and the use of cyberspace for recruitment and propaganda all present a new level of threat. We need significant options for international cooperation, which, unfortunately, we do not discern in the Plan before us today.

Thirdly, it is our view that the current architecture at the United Nations is not sufficient to tackle the virus that threatens us collectively. The Plan of Action provides no solution to that shortcoming. For example, where is the single contact point that will assist Member States that seek United Nations assistance in preventing violent extremism? Having gone through the entire Plan of Action, we did not, unfortunately, find an answer to that simple and basic question.

Fourthly and finally, even when all the numerous prescriptions listed in the Plan of Action are implemented, there will still be cases where we will not be able to prevent determined instances of violent extremism metamorphosing into terrorism. It is our view that no grievance whatsoever — I repeat, no grievance — can justify resorting to terrorism. While emphasizing prevention, we should not shift our focus from ensuring that violent extremists are also subject to the full force of the law, as they pose an imminent and continuing danger.

India is a nation of many faiths and great diversity of beliefs. It is a nation whose unity is strengthened by its pluralism. It is our firm belief that, ultimately, it is the values represented by open and tolerant societies that are the best foil to the forces of violent extremism. Guided by that approach, we look forward to discussing the issues presented in the Plan of Action in greater detail at the earliest opportunity.

Mr. Hilale (Morocco) (*spoke in French*): Let me first congratulate the President for convening this debate on the Plan of Action to Prevent Violent Extremism (A/70/674).

The Kingdom of Morocco believes that preventing violent extremism, which leads to terrorism, must be among the priorities of the United Nations in facing the global threat of terrorism. That threat has become worldwide in scale, and no State or society is spared. Accordingly, Morocco has not hesitated to support the Secretary-General's Plan of Action.

Several factors have come together to fuel the violent extremism that leads to terrorism, including the repercussions of the economic and financial crisis, which led to the unemployment of our young people; wars that have led to displaced persons and millions refugees; shortcomings in good governance, democracy, justice and the rule of law; and xenophobic provocations and Islamophobia. All of that demands concerted action on the part of all States Members of the United Nations, which has the duty to help Member States to take ownership of the development of their national action plans to prevent violent extremism while fully enjoying their sovereignty. It is therefore important to support the educational and technical cooperation provided to Member States and to encourage South-South and triangular cooperation. In that regard, we welcome the cooperation programmes developed in the framework of the United Nations Counter-Terrorism Centre.

The prevention of violent extremism in all its forms, including that leading to terrorism, is part of Morocco's national strategy to combat terrorism. That strategy revolves around a three-pronged approach to security and strengthening anti-terrorist laws: human development, religious reform, and de-radicalization. It is also consistent with many elements of the national plan of action to prevent violent extremism.

Religious reform has included, among other things, the training of young imams and preachers in the values and precepts of true Islam. In March 2015, His Majesty the King inaugurated the Mohammed VI Institute for the Training of Imams, Morchidines and Morchidates, which is open to all countries of the world. A deradicalization, rehabilitation and integration programme for foreign terrorist fighters has also been launched. Morocco is faithful to its mission to share and exchange expertise with other African countries and has begun religious cooperation with a number of African and European countries that have concluded cooperation agreements with Morocco on the training of imams and morchidates at the Mohammed VI Institute.

The Kingdom of Morocco will spare no effort to bring religious leaders of all faiths to discuss ways to mitigate the exploitation of religion that fuels violent extremism leading to terrorism. Therefore, in Fez in April 2015, the Kingdom of Morocco organized the first forum on the role of religious leaders in preventing the incitement to hatred, which was resulted in the adoption of the Fez Declaration. That forum underscored the importance and relevance of interfaith cooperation in the fight against all forms of discrimination, xenophobia and incitement to hatred.

In addition, from 25 to 28 January, under the patronage of His Majesty King Mohammed VI, Morocco organized in Marrakech a conference on the protection of religious minorities in Muslim societies. In his opening speech at the conference, His Majesty the King stressed the importance of cooperation among the followers of all religions in confronting the challenges of discrimination and intolerance. The conference adopted the Marrakesh Declaration, which called, among other things, for a review of education and religious programmes with a view to highlighting the virtues of cohabitation, tolerance and coexistence among all religions. That is the only way to counteract the hate speech of Da'esh, Al-Qaida and their associates.

From the outset, the Kingdom of Morocco has supported the adoption of a short and procedural resolution welcoming the initiative of the Secretary-General and at least taking note of the Plan of Action. The draft resolution circulated on 9 February by the President of the General Assembly, following consultations with Member States, provided an opportunity to move forward and bring together all positions for the adoption by consensus this morning of resolution 70/254.

The fifth review meeting on the United Nations Global Counter-Terrorism Strategy, scheduled for June, and other relevant forums will provide optimal opportunities to examine other, related issues. The recommendations presented by the Secretary-General are relevant, in particular on the issues of young people and the fight against violent extremism in the media and the Internet, as well as in other sectors.

Integrating the prevention of violent extremism into the activities of peacekeeping operations and special political missions may jeopardize or complicate the specific mandates of such operations and missions. That said, the Plan of Action represents an important basis for fighting violent extremism and for creating a space of consensus among all the countries of the world to face that global phenomenon. Violent terrorism and violent extremism do not allow us to remain apart. On the contrary, we must come together and bring together all forces and efforts and, above all, demonstrate tolerance and acceptance of the other. The entire international community must do it together with a more appropriate role for the United Nations, which must lead us in that area.

In conclusion, the Kingdom of Morocco welcomes the value added by the complementarity of the Plan of Action to both the United Nations Global Counter-Terrorism Strategy — the implementation of whose pillars will contribute effectively to its application — and the Security Council resolutions on the fight against terrorism and violent extremism, in particular resolution 2178 (2014), which links violent extremism to terrorism.

Mr. Sadykov (Kazakhstan): The delegation of Kazakhstan would like to thank Secretary-General Ban Ki-moon, the Counter-Terrorism Implementation Task Force team and other United Nations entities directly involved in establishing preventive mechanisms within the global approach of the United Nations to the fight against violent extremism, which is conducive to terrorism. Kazakhstan welcomes the initiative of the Secretary-General to address the phenomenon of violent extremism, as well as his efforts to that end.

We are all aware of the impact of terrorist groups operating in various parts of the world. It is therefore necessary to mobilize regional structures, such as the Shanghai Cooperation Organization, the Conference on Interaction and Confidence-building Measures in Asia, the Collective Security Treaty Organization, the League of Arab States, the African Union, the European Union and the Organization for Security and Cooperation in Europe, so as to maintain security in the vast area covered by those organizations. Closer coordination with the International Criminal Police Organization is also an absolute necessity.

In addition, Governments must come forward to share intelligence about terrorist groups and their movements and about funding sources for strengthened action. At the same time, support and technical assistance, training, resources and equipment need to be provided to weaker States so that they can fight violence and extremism in their territories and along their borders.

Given the situation with regard to violent extremism, my delegation would like to mention the proposal of the President of Kazakhstan, Mr. Nursultan Nazarbayev, to establish a United-Nations-led counter-terrorism coalition with a unified mechanism to defeat that scourge and bring perpetrators and their supporters to justice. Such an entity would bring together and strengthen all the existing United Nations structures into a well-coordinated global effort. In our view, the current United Nations mechanisms, including the United Nations Global Counter-Terrorism Strategy, should be made legally binding through relevant Security Council resolutions. Thus the speedy adoption of a comprehensive document on the issue of international terrorism is most critical.

We call on all delegations to support such a bold and forward-looking approach, as well as to develop further the recommendations of the Secretary-General to prevent violent extremism, as reflected in his Plan of Action (A/70/674). Kazakhstan believes that the strategy of the Secretary-General should represent a set of coordinated actions by the international community to prevent the emergence and escalation of violent extremism. We commend and support the Plan of Action as a whole and resolution 70/254, adopted today on thissubject.

We urge that no action be taken that could lead to the destruction of the foundations of statehood or facilitate the emergence and growth of extremist sentiments in society. Peace and security are interrelated. It is obvious that the world has not done enough to invest in sustainable development. Therefore, Kazakhstan has proposed that Member States allot 1 per cent of their national defence expenditure to the United Nations Sustainable Development Goals Fund.

Kazakhstan hosted a regional conference on countering violent extremism on 29 and 30 June 2015, as a follow-up to the summit on that theme held earlier in Washington. This May, my country will convene a high-level forum entitled "Religions for Peace" under the patronage of the President of the General Assembly. The forum aims to demonstrate how religious unity can be harnessed to combat the destructive nature of terrorism and violent extremism.

Kazakhstan stands ready to join the multilateral action of the United Nations system and Member States aimed at achieving a peaceful and secure world.

The meeting rose at 1.15 p.m.

United Nations A/70/PV.85

General Assembly
Seventieth session

Official Records

85th plenary meeting

Friday, 12 February 2016, 3 p.m.
New York

President: Mr. Lykketoft .... (Denmark)

In the absence of the President, Mr. Gumende (Mozambique), Vice-President, took the Chair.

The meeting was called to order at 3.10 p.m.

Agenda items 16 and 117 (*continued*)

Culture of peace

The United Nations Global Counter-Terrorism Strategy

Report of the Secretary-General (A/70/674)

The Acting President: We will now continue to hear statements on the report of the Secretary-General (A/70/674).

Ms. Rodríguez Abascal (Cuba) (*spoke in Spanish*): We strongly support the collective efforts of the United Nations in its fight against terrorism. The United Nations Global Counter-Terrorism Strategy (resolution 60/288) is a milestone in the international confrontation with that scourge and appropriately gives the General Assembly the central role in such efforts. Any effort undertaken in that area must be supported by the pillars of the Strategy. We take note of the Secretary-General's initiative set forth in document A/70/674 and his commitment to developing a Plan of Action to Prevent Violent Extremism.

Cuba is a country that, in the process of defending its independence and dignity, has for decades suffered the consequences of criminal terrorist acts organized, financed and executed from outside its territory. The human toll as a result of such acts amounts to 3,478 dead and 2,099 disabled. We reiterate our steadfast determination to fight terrorism and our deepest rejection and condemnation of all terrorist acts, methods and practices in all their forms and manifestations by whomever, against whomever and wherever they may occur, whatever their motivations might be, including those in which States are directly or indirectly involved.

The international community should not accept that, under the pretext of an alleged fight against terrorism, certain States commit acts of aggression, interfere in the internal affairs of other States, or commit or allow gross violations of human rights and international humanitarian law, including torture, kidnapping, illegal detentions, disappearances and extrajudicial executions. Double standards are unacceptable, nor are unilateral actions, which are contrary to the Charter of the United Nations and the principles and norms of international law.

The violation of those legal and ethical principles fertilizes the soil for terrorism and undermines the legitimacy of our fight against that phenomenon. Respect for international law, the freedom of persons and the self-determination of peoples, the promotion of social justice, equity and inclusion, and solidarity among peoples and at the international level aimed at realizing the right to development are essential objectives and humanist culture values that we defend. Excessive wealth and selfishness, injustice and intolerance, domination and unilateralism promote terror and violence.

The Secretary-General's Plan of Action is consistent and dovetails with the forthcoming review of the

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United Nations Global Counter-Terrorism Strategy. It is a contribution to that process, but it should not replace the Strategy. It is clear that any decision on such a vital issue can be achieved only through consensus among the States Members of the United Nations.

Terrorism is an affront to the purposes and principles of the United Nations. It undermines international peace and security, human rights and sustainable development, as is stated in the introduction to the Plan of Action. No country or region is immune to its effects, nor should the phenomenon be associated with any specific religion, race or an ethnic group. In order to eliminate it, we must address the causes and conditions that generate it: poverty, inequality, underdevelopment, exclusion, injustice, military interventions, foreign occupation and interference with the intention to dominate others, discrimination, inter alia, are all drivers of violent extremism. The efforts of the international community should include actions to overcome their root causes.

Our country has worked steadily to develop policies designed to prevent conditions for the emergence of terrorism in all its forms and manifestations. An example is the fact that in Cuba there is absolute respect for all religious beliefs, which may be practiced without hindrance. There is also a comprehensive scheme of social protection, high levels of education, health care and social security. Young people play an important role in society, and there is strong and effective legislation for the fight against terrorism.

The international community requires more dialogue and understanding among cultures and civilizations. That must be provided in order to deal with the increase in attacks and kidnappings and the use of modern information and communications technologies in activities related to and in promotion of terrorism. Those new technologies represent a challenge to the exercise of self-determination of peoples, owing to their manipulation as weapons for political regime change, masked in interventionist projects that follow flexible scripts contained in the strategy of so-called soft coups. In those soft coups, the recourse to terrorist acts is preserved if such acts are deemed essential to meeting the objective of overthrowing the legitimate authorities of the country in question.

It is worth reiterating the complaint against and the condemnation of the actions of a few powerful States that design, finance and implement actions contrary to the purposes and principles of the United Nations Charter and international law, making use of the Internet and such traditional media as radio and television. Such actions, which may even take the form of acts of cyberwar, most commonly appear in projects aimed at undermining the constitutional order of sovereign States and at spreading messages of intolerance, hate and lies against other peoples, cultures, political systems or history.

The elimination of terrorism requires all States without exception to comply with their international obligations, including the prosecution or extradition of the perpetrators of such crimes. No State genuinely committed to the fight against terrorism can be allowed to provide a safe haven for terrorists. There exists no argument that could legitimize such actions.

We reiterate our unwavering will and commitment in the fight against the scourge of terrorism in all its forms and manifestations and our constant readiness to cooperate with all Member States guided by the goal of achieving a concerted response to terrorism. We reaffirm the central role of the General Assembly in the full and effective implementation of the United Nations Global Counter-Terrorism Strategy.

Ms. Argüello González (Nicaragua) (*spoke in Spanish*): For the delegation of Nicaragua, today's agenda item represents a theme of vital importance, and we shall give a brief summary of certain points that are crucial to us with regard to the issue of violent extremism.

We take note of the Secretary-General's initiative, contained in document A/70/674 and of his efforts to develop a Plan of Action to Prevent Violent Extremism.

In 2013, the Islamic Republic of Iran proposed resolution 68/127, which Nicaragua co-sponsored and which had the support of the Movement of Non-Aligned Countries. The resolution, entitled "A world against violence and violent extremism", addresses the challenge faced by the international community, given that such threats are without borders and that it is only by pulling together that we can combat them. We reiterate the overriding need to discuss the issue of violent extremism among Member States and to find solutions together. Perhaps the best time to do so would be when we meet to discuss the United Nations Global Counter-Terrorism Strategy in June.

The Nicaraguan delegation rejects and condemns terrorism in all its forms and manifestations by whomsoever, against whomsoever and wherever committed, regardless of motivation, including acts in which States are directly or indirectly involved. For our country, it is of vital importance to respect international law and the right of peoples to self-determination and an inclusive social development that truly takes into account the right to development.

Global capitalism promotes terror and violence. We must tackle its root causes, fighting for a fair society where no one feels excluded. Violent extremism is not exclusive to any region, nationality or system of beliefs. It is, therefore, a threat against which we must all fight. Nicaragua reaffirms that the situation will worsen if we do not act together to try to address the causes of such anxiety, brutality and catastrophe.

In the words of our President, Commander Daniel Ortega Saavedra:

> "Our Organization should promote respect, peace, sovereign security, justice and solidarity among human beings. The Organization must respond in the face of that barbaric intervention in and interruption of the tranquillity and the right to prosperity in the lives of millions of families of countries and entire populations." (*A/70/PV.23, p. 11*)

Ms. Grignon (Kenya): My delegation wishes to thank the President for organizing this timely debate and for his continued engagement on the issue of how best to take forward the Secretary-General's Plan of Action to Prevent Violent Extremism (A/70/674), including through resolution 70/254, which the Assembly adopted on Friday.

We also thank the Secretary-General for presenting to the Assembly the Plan of Action to Prevent Violent Extremism. As he noted during his presentation, the Plan of Action is an urgent call for unity and action against violent extremism and terrorism. Indeed, the theme of the general debate at the Assembly's seventieth session was "A new commitment to action", with a focus on sustainable development, peace and security, human rights and good governance.

Allow me to reaffirm Kenya's commitment to multilateralism and a rule-based international system. I assure the President of our delegation's continued support for efforts to strengthen the United Nations and to enable it to meet contemporary and future challenges, while maintaining its character as a universal body for our common good. The General Assembly is the only forum with the legitimacy and universality to address violent extremism in all its complexity. It needs to take a greater leadership role in response to that threat.

The Kenyan delegation welcomes the Plan of Action as complementary to existing national strategies and plans on violent extremism. We shall utilize it as a guide to strengthen our national plans and strategies and also to on draw lessons learned from it to help us to improve our responses to violent extremism. Similarly, the recommendations in the Plan of Action will help us to enhance the coordination of programmes and other activities aimed at preventing violent extremism nationally, regionally and globally.

Although the United Nations cannot provide a one-size-fits-all solution to the task of preventing violent extremism, it provides the best forum for unifying efforts. It is by focusing more on what unites us all collectively and less on what divides us, in terms of global action against violent extremism, that we will be able to achieve more than the sum total of our individual efforts. That calls for genuine efforts to share information, ideas and experiences on best and proven practices. To succeed, we must send a clear signal that we are united against violent extremism and that we are determined to overcome our differences.

We need to address all the factors that make our youth, both rich and poor, so vulnerable to violent extremist ideology. The Plan of Action lays a solid basis for addressing those factors, and Member States should endeavour to incorporate its recommendations at the national and regional levels, while considering our unique socioeconomic, cultural and political circumstances.

I wish to reaffirm Kenya's commitment to implementing the United Nations Global Counter-Terrorism Strategy, especially the current efforts to review the Strategy and align it with the changing realities on the ground. We are also committed to other international obligations, including the various Security Council resolutions relating to countering terrorism and preventing violent extremism. In that regard, I cite Council resolutions 1373 (2001), 1624 (2005), 2178 (2014) and 2253 (2015). We shall continue to partner with the United Nations Counter-Terrorism Implementation Task Force and the Counter-Terrorism

Committee Executive Directorate in order to bolster our capabilities and implement commitments on countering terrorism and preventing violent extremism.

In conclusion, I wish to reiterate that Kenya fully supports all efforts aimed at preventing violent extremism and looks forward to engaging further during the upcoming review of the United Nations Global Counter-Terrorism Strategy.

Mr. Minami (Japan): At the outset, allow me to express my gratitude to the President for convening today's debate.

Today, we face the threat of terrorism, especially from the Islamic State in Iraq and the Levant (ISIL), or Da'esh. Despite various measures taken by international society, terrorists continue to thrive and commit murder, torture and sexual violence and, of course, create humanitarian crises. It is deplorable that around 30,000 foreign terrorist fighters from more than 100 Member States have been attracted to ISIL and associated groups and actively engage with them. Now is the prime time to combat the root cause of terrorism, namely, violent extremism.

In addition to the conventional countermeasures, we must address violent extremism conducive to terrorism. This timely Plan of Action, which is a landmark document, is gaining momentum. Japan strongly supports resolution 70/254 and the Plan of Action. We believe the resolutionwill be an important demonstration of our solid determination.

Years ago, Japan established a national action plan to make our society safe. We have taken law enforcement measures as well as preventative measures, such as community policing, the protection of women and children and the rehabilitation of prisoners. Outside Japan, we have been supporting various regions to help create societies resilient to radicalization through vocational training, school construction and assistance with the reintegration of ex-soldiers.

ISIL is spreading its ideology globally by taking advantage of conflict areas and vulnerable countries. Moreover, ISIL is not alone in propagating the ideology of violent extremism aimed at inspiring and recruiting a number of young people. We must ourselves increase our efforts to prevent violent extremism in each of our societies and then support those who do not have the capacity to do so themselves. We must remove loopholes. The United Nations plays a critical role in supporting Member States in need. I urge United Nations entities to coordinate with each other so as to avoid duplication, and to act collectively. I urge Member States to unite to fight terrorism and prevent violent extremism. I look forward to discussing concrete actions based on resolution 70/254 and the Plan of Action.

Mr. Mnatsakanyan (Armenia): At the outset, I thank the President of the General Assembly and his team for convening this timely meeting and for conducting our business in a transparent and inclusive manner.

As terrorism and violent extremism are on the rise globally, the efforts by the international community should be redoubled to prevent and counter such scourges in an effective manner. The United Nations has a considerable role to play in changing the environment conducive to intolerance, racial discrimination, xenophobia, violent extremism and terrorism around the world.

We join others in thanking the Secretary-General for his efforts in preparing the comprehensive Plan of Action to Prevent Violent Extremism. His report (A/70/674) is under consideration in Armenia. The report clearly applies a multidisciplinary approach and methodology in addressing the various drivers of violent extremism and in offering a set of preventive tools at the national, regional and international levels.

The Plan of Action draws a distinct link between conflict prevention and resolution on the one hand, and the prevention of violent extremism, on the other. In that respect, we would like to highlight the importance of regional mechanisms for conflict mediation and resolution, as well as the need to prevent terrorism and violent extremism by reducing the appeal of, and support for, violent extremist groups and ideologies. Such an approach is duly elaborated in the document. Further strengthening early warning and detection mechanisms and enhancing the prevention toolbox at all levels are also crucial to that end. We note with satisfaction the provisions referring to the establishment of early warning centres and the prohibition of incitement to hatred.

Prevention should be the primary action aimed at halting deteriorating situations and their progression into crisis. Armenia has been a continuous supporter of and contributor to the elaboration of preventive mechanisms at the national and international levels. In particular, the resolutions on the prevention of genocide, which have been consistently initiated by Armenia in the

Human Rights Council since 2005, attach prominence to the critical functions of early warning and early action. Early signs of a spread of violent extremism should remain a focus for collective efforts and actions. Armenia consistently supports the efforts of the Special Adviser on the Prevention of Genocide to elaborate the concept of prevention, as well as practical tools for the early detection of deteriorating situations.

The drivers of radicalization — the "pull" and "push" factors, as identified in the report — are detectable at early stages. Continued and systematic violations of human rights, marginalization, discrimination, poor governance and the denial of opportunities are precursors for massive crimes, for which violent extremism is the conduit and instrument. The need for a comprehensive approach to preventing radicalization, violent extremism and atrocities is compelling. We note that such an approach is duly reflected in the Plan of Action.

The present report and the Plan of Action serve as an important contribution to continued, consolidated and determined international efforts to combat violent extremism. Indeed, Member States should further the understanding of the phenomenon and the implementation of individual and collective measures against it. We note that the report recognizes the diverse nature of the phenomenon, which still requires a clear definition. Finally, the efforts of the international community, in denying fertile ground for violent extremism, should join the broader vision for change, which is evolving towards a solid, shared responsibility for humanity. The Secretary-General makes a strong appeal to send forth a resounding call for peace, justice and human dignity. Armenia looks forward to further consideration of the Plan of Action at the Global Counter-Terrorism Strategy Review in June 2016 and in other relevant forums.

Mr. Mashkoor (Iraq) (*spoke in Arabic*): At the outset, my delegation would like to align itself with the statement made by the Permanent Representative of the Kingdom of Saudi Arabia on behalf of the States members of the Organization of Islamic Cooperation (see A/70/PV.84).

My country would like to extend its thanks and appreciation to the Secretary-General for his great efforts in preparing the Plan of Action to Prevent Violent Extremism (A/70/674).

Violent extremism is a grave challenge that has the attention of Member States, in particular Iraq. We believe that the Plan will be useful if all Member States are committed to it, in line with their international obligations under Security Council and General Assembly resolutions on the fight against violent extremism. Violent extremism has given rise to international terrorism, which is spreading across our societies. Terrorists come from more than 100 Member States of the United Nations, committing the most egregious forms of killing, which run counter to the fundamental principles of humanity, coexistence, tolerance and respect for diversity. That is why it is necessary to combat terrorism and to support international efforts to counter it and curb its dangers and threats.

Violent extremist ideologies are a direct threat to international peace and security, undermining social coexistence and cohesion as well as stability in our societies. We should therefore adopt an informed approach to combating those challenges, one based on a clear strategy and explicit and declared positions. In that regard, my country notes that the adoption of educational curricula that accuse people of apostasy or infidelity and that promote erroneous Takfiri fatwas through the social media has led to extremist ideological aberrations that use terrorism — in all its forms and manifestations — as a tool to impose erroneous ideologies, threatening international peace and security, as well as human civilization. It is necessary to reform educational curricula in certain countries and adopt appropriate mechanisms to prevent the use of the Internet and audiovisual media in the promotion of extremism and recruitment of terrorists.

Countering those challenges and the threat of violent extremism requires a commitment to tolerance, reconciliation and respect for cultural and religious diversity and for the freedom of thought and expression. Dialogue among religious leaders is an important tool in efforts to strengthen peaceful coexistence within and among societies and respect for religious and ideological diversity, as well as our common humanity.

To decisively counter the perpetrators and drivers of violence and extremism, it is necessary to dry up the resources of terrorism, as stipulated in Security Council resolutions 2170 (2014), 2178 (2014) and 2199 (2015). It is also important to promote the concepts of good governance, the rule of law and human rights; to create job opportunities for young people and women;

to implement development programmes; and to provide basic services.

There is also a need to ensure accountability and punishment for perpetrators of violations of human rights laws. In that regard, the Iraqi Government, in accordance with our programme, is deepening the concept of citizenship. We are seeking to ensure political, economic and legislative reform and to build national cohesion by unifying the efforts of all components of Iraqi society. Therefore, today we bear witness to a general national consensus on our national principles.

Terrorist organizations, such as Da'esh, the Al-Nusra Front, Boko Haram and Al-Qaida are committing the most heinous forms of killing and destruction in the name of Islam, a religion that has nothing to do with such acts. It is, therefore, the responsibility of Governments and religious leaders to combat extremist and Takfiri ideology, and the misleading fatwas of jihad. Religious discourse should also combat exclusionist views and their supporters by promoting the true teachings of our venerable religion and by exposing the baselessness of the slogans of such violent extremist ideology.

In conclusion, my country would like to endorse the report of the Secretary-General (A/70/674) and the whole-of-United-Nations approach. In that connection, we welcome the elements of resolution 70/254. We will work closely with Member States and with the United Nations to implement the Plan of Action, because Iraq is one of the countries most affected by the phenomenon of violent terrorism and international terrorism, one of the tools of violent extremism.

Mr. Anshor (Indonesia): Let me begin by thanking the President of the General Assembly for convening this meeting to discuss the Plan of Action to Prevent Violent Extremism, as recommended by the Secretary-General (A/70/674).

I wish to align my statement with the statement delivered by the representative of Saudi Arabia on behalf of the Organization of Islamic Cooperation (see A/70/PV.84).

Indonesia remains concerned about the surge of violent extremism that is conducive to terrorism. It is a threat to our security and well-being and to the values of humankind. Accordingly, Indonesia appreciates the Secretary-General's initiative to present the Plan of Action for consideration by Member States.

In our view, the Plan of Action will enrich our discussion at relevant United Nations forums on countering terrorism and violent extremism. The Plan of Action may also help us to enhance our national strategies aimed at addressing violent extremism and exploring preventive measures, and to improve programmes to implement the United Nations Global Counter-Terrorism Strategy. We note that the Plan of Action includes various relevant ideas, best practices and lessons learned put forward by many stakeholders. Some of the recommendations in the Plan of Action have, actually, already been put into operation by States, including Indonesia.

It is critical to have a comprehensive understanding of the nature of violent extremism, including the conditions that breed it. Indonesia takes note that the Plan of Action was developed based on the premise that violent extremism does not arise in a vacuum. Its root causes are complex, and a multidisciplinary approach is needed to prevent it. Yet, there are challenges to our efforts to build such a comprehensive understanding.

First, there are gaps separating some of the key pertinent values that exist in our different communities and a lack of efforts to address those gaps. That challenge is particularly evident in certain manifestations of the exercise of fundamental freedoms, including the freedom of expression. There are cases when the exercise of freedom of expression is considered legitimate by some communities but at the same time is seen as an affront by other communities with different values or beliefs. That challenge will become more complex if the practice of double standards in deciding the limits of freedom of expression continues. The lack of respect for different values will only create different and mutually exclusive narratives in dealing with common problems and thereby prevent Member States from arriving at a common resolve.

Secondly, there is persistent stigmatization against certain groups of people. Stigmatization creates mutual suspicion in communities. That is certainly counterproductive to efforts to build cohesive communities, which are indispensable for preventing violent extremism.

Indonesia believes that it is important to overcome those two challenges in our efforts to arrive at a common understanding. Without that common understanding, we will not be able to build a common platform to respond to violent extremism, let alone strengthen cooperation to prevent it. More dangerously, the inability, or even unwillingness, to overcome those two challenges will widen the distrust that continues to exist among States. Clearly, such a condition is not conducive to success in our fight against violent extremism.

Indonesia will give further consideration to the practical recommendations contained in the Plan of Action, with a view to improving our national strategies against extremism and radicalization. From our own experiences, measures that emphasize the engagement of key stakeholders, such as families, schools and religious institutions, have a great chance of success in preventing violent extremism. Such measures must certainly be followed by policies that enhance the cohesiveness and inclusiveness of society. It is along those lines that Indonesia created its counter-radicalization and deradicalization programme. The programme emphasizes dialogue between moderate religious leaders and convicted terrorists serving their time in prisons and economically empowers deradicalized persons with a view to equipping them to reintegrate into society.

In conclusion, I wish to reiterate the urgency of finding political solutions to prolonged and unresolved conflicts, as well as to foreign occupation and subjugation. Areas with protracted conflicts have been used by extremists as safe havens, while foreign occupation and subjugation have been exploited by extremists to propagate their views, even to people who live far away from conflict areas. Those facts alone should remind all States to re-energize collective efforts in this matter.

Mr. Ja'afari (Syrian Arab Republic) (*spoke in Arabic*): I would like to extend my thanks to the President for convening this important meeting. My delegation takes notes of the report of the Secretary-General and the Plan of Action to Prevent Violent Extremism (A/70/674).

Once again, we reaffirm the support of the Syrian Arab Republic for all serious and sincere efforts to address the threat posed by terrorism and its toxic ideology and to uphold the values of tolerance, dialogue and respect for religions and civilizations — values for which Syria has been known over the years. We are trying our best to preserve those values.

The first step to success in combating terrorism and grappling with the phenomenon of violent extremism and its consequences, such as the phenomenon of foreign terrorist fighters, lies in the strict adherence to Security Council and other United Nations counter-terrorism resolutions and related instruments, in particular resolutions 1624 (2005), 2170 (2014), 2178 (2014), 2199 (2015) and 2253 (2015) and the United Nations Global Counter-Terrorism Strategy. Governments that violate such instruments and provide various forms of support to terrorism must be held accountable.

Indeed, any effort to prevent violent extremism requires adherence to international law and the Charter of the United Nations in order to address its root causes. We need not reinvent the wheel or start again from scratch. Our work must be based on the instruments that we have adopted in recent years within the framework of various agenda items, such as countering terrorism, the culture of peace, dialogue among civilizations and combating intolerance, discrimination, incitement and violence. In that manner we can benefit from our cumulative work and experience.

In that regard, I would like to stress that if the United Nations is to achieve concrete results, it must reject double standards in countering terrorism. The Organization should not ignore the behaviour of Governments that support terrorism, prolong crises and impede their settlement, incite violence and terrorism, and spread hate speech, intolerance and discrimination based on various factors. Such well-known Governments claim that they seek to combat the violent extremism that they actually support and propagate. They proclaim their resolve to combat the very terrorism that they have created and sponsored.

My delegation would like to stress that efforts to prevent violent extremism will not succeed unless the international community ends the Israeli occupation of the Syrian Golan and other occupied Arab territories in Palestine and Lebanon and the violent extremism and terrorism perpetrated by Israeli settlers against Arab citizens living under occupation. Violent Israeli extremism has been backed by extreme Israeli Governments that have refused and rejected resolutions of international legitimacy and sought to create a one-religion State in the occupied territories that excludes the followers of other faiths.

It is also essential to end the injustices caused by violations of international law and the United Nations Charter through illegitimate foreign military interventions, unilateral coercive measures and discrimination, all of which the United Nations maintains are invalid. Such harmful behaviour includes discrimination based on religion, colour, race or nationality, the distortion and defamation of religions, the use of hate speech and incitement and stereotyping in political and partisan campaigns.

With regard to the points contained in the Secretary-General's report and the Plan of Action, my delegation would like to raise the following points.

First, what are the criteria that will enable the legislative parties to decide whether or not extremism by an individual is violent? Who will make that decision? How can we standardize the norms in different cultures and civilizations? At what point does extremism become violent? Such questions remain unanswered.

Second, if, according to the Secretary-General's report, Da'esh represents violent extremism, how can foreign terrorist fighters join such a violently extremist organization without the organization itself being described as such? The situation has become so unrealistic and so ludicrous that today some States refer to those fighters — mercenary foreign terrorist fighters brought into Syria and Iraq, but particularly to Syria, from all over the world — as the moderate Syrian opposition. That is the ludicrous landscape that we are facing today.

Third, the Secretary-General's report indicates that violent extremists have been able to recruit over 30,000 foreign terrorist fighters from more than 100 States Members of the United Nations to go to Syria and Iraq. Given our strong reservations with regard to that number — because the actual figure is much higher — the question is: did those violent extremists or terrorists succeed on their own? Did States send all of those foreign terrorist fighters? Did fighters manage to recruit additional terrorist fighters all on their own? What of the Governments supporting terrorism that have facilitated, armed and funded those terrorists? Some of them are Governments of Member States well known to the Assembly. One of them has been entrusted with sponsoring the United Nations Counter-Terrorism Centre; a national of another holds the post of United Nations High Representative for the Alliance of Civilizations, and in a few months, a third will host the World Humanitarian Summit.

Fourth, the report states that Da'esh and other extremist groups have benefited from the armed conflict in Syria and the instability in Iraq and Libya. Yet the report deliberately ignores the fact that the main reason for the emergence of Da'esh, which was spawned by Al-Qaida in Iraq, is the illegitimate military interventions in Member States, persecution, oppression and human rights violations and the destruction and looting of the capabilities of those countries and peoples. Like other reports issued by the Secretariat, the report under consideration also deliberately disregards the terrorist entity referred to as the Al-Nusrah Front in an attempt to legitimize that entity and treat it as Syrian moderate armed opposition.

Fifth, in his Plan of Action, the Secretary-General repeatedly uses the term "rule of law" in an exaggerated manner, with a view to creating the impression that the term is one of the pillars of the work of the United Nations enshrined in the Charter. The Secretariat is well aware of the fact that there is, to date, no agreed definition for that term, and Member States differ considerably on its implementation at the national and international levels. What we are trying to say is that the Secretariat should wait until there is consensus among the Member States on that term before promoting it and issuing it in a report of the Secretary-General.

Sixth, the Secretary-General's Plan of Action refers to his intention to strengthen such efforts in line with his initiative entitled Human Rights Up Front, which was prepared by the Secretary-General alone and has not been considered officially or sufficiently and has not yet been adopted by Member States.

Seventh, the Secretary-General refers to his intention to include the prevention of violent extremism in the framework of the activities of peacekeeping operations and special political missions. Such a proposal raises legal concerns related to the mandates of peacekeeping operations and the fact that most peacekeepers often do not know the traditions and beliefs and cultures of the host communities and are not able to judge what is violent extremism and what is non-violent extremism in those communities.

Eighth, the Secretary-General reaffirms the importance of engaging the concerned parties and of their participation and of a plurality of views, while at the same time that he excludes interested countries from consultations and ignores observations and information addressed to him by certain Member States, including by us in the Syrian Arab Republic.

Ninth, for decades my country has taken measures to prevent extremism and terrorism. The Plan of Action includes important and constructive recommendations and proposals, but we fear that other States will not remain committed to it after its adoption, as has been the case with Security Council resolutions on counter-terrorism, which are openly violated by the Governments of some Member States without any concerns about accountability. How can repressive regimes that resemble those of the Middle Ages, that marginalize women, who make up half of the society, and that spread Wahhabi extremist ideas and sponsor terrorist organizations — such as Da'esh, the Al-Nusra Front, the Muslim Brotherhood, the Khorasan Group and the Jaish al-Muhajireen wal-Ansar and others — accept a Plan that calls for strengthening the role and status of women and the values of tolerance, respect for religions and human rights?

Tenth, with regard to funding the Plan of Action, my delegation underscores the fundamental legal principle that the responsibility for reparations lies with the perpetrator. Hence, the United Nations and its principle organ, the Security Council, should place the responsibility on the Member States supporting terrorism and oblige them to repatriate their fighters and shoulder the main cost of combating terrorism and violent extremism which leads to terrorism.

In conclusion, my delegation calls on the Secretariat to address our concerns and the rightful concerns raised by other delegations with regard to the Plan of Action. My delegation welcomes that discussion.

Mr. Perera (Sri Lanka): My delegation welcomes the efforts of the Secretary-General and his proposed Plan of Action to Prevent Violent Extremism (A/70/674) with its focus on seven priority areas.

As a country that suffered under the oppressive yoke of violent extremism and terrorism for nearly three decades, until 2009, Sri Lanka understands the challenges and encourages genuine efforts to strengthen the United Nations system and its role and effectiveness in addressing that issue.

Sri Lanka wholeheartedly condemns violent extremism and terrorism in all its forms and manifestations, and recognizes the need to acknowledge the link between violent extremism and terrorism, which is a scourge not exclusive to any one country or region and which is spreading across national borders. That rising transnational phenomenon challenges existing borders and threatens the very fabric of sovereign States upon which the international legal order is based.

We continue to be deeply concerned over the acute and growing threat of foreign terrorist fighters. With tens of thousands of such fighters hailing from over 100 States, it is imperative to harness the global support and respond more aggressively to those threats. The phenomenon has assumed serious proportions, given the widespread death and destruction caused by organizations such as Islamic State in Iraq and the Levant (ISIL) and other groups. We also have to look at new and innovative ways to counter that growing threat. For instance, it is well known today that there are more than 50,000 Twitter accounts supporting ISIL, with an average of 1,000 followers each. We therefore welcome all Security Council resolutions on foreign terrorist fighters, including resolution 2178 (2014), condemning violent extremism and underscoring the need to prevent travel of and support for foreign terrorist fighters.

International networks with linkages to organized crime are a critical lifeline for violent extremism and terrorists groups. They are not phenomena that a single State or a few States can deal with; rather the problem demands a concerted global effort. It is therefore imperative for all Member States to pool their resources and share intelligence to counter that threat.

Today, particularly in the Middle East and in East and West Africa, as indeed in many other parts of the world, violent extremism targets vulnerable and marginalized communities, children, minorities, women and girls. It is therefore imperative that we proactively include and engage those entities of the United Nations system that deal with children, minorities, women and girls.

As comprehensively listed in the Secretary-General's Plan of Action, the areas of human development, the empowerment of women and youth and the strengthening of good governance, human rights and the rule of law are of critical importance in the fight against violent extremism and terrorism. The eradication of poverty, in concert with increased social and economic opportunities, is essential to efforts to counter human frustration and the threat of radicalization.

We need to sharpen and strengthen inter-agency coordination methods and avoid practices that sometimes substitute process for outcome. Sri Lanka therefore not only welcomes the necessary paradigm shift from countering violent extremism to preventing violent extremism, but also the all-of-the-United Nations approach envisaged in the Plan of Action.

We agree with the Secretary-General that the United Nations, as the foremost multilateral body, must act to prevent the further spread of violent extremism. In doing so, we need to adopt a comprehensive approach that encompasses not only ongoing essential security-based counter-terrorism measures, but also systematic preventive measures that directly address the drivers of violent extremism at the local, national, regional and global levels.

Indeed, the General Assembly unanimously adopted the United Nations Global Counter-Terrorism Strategy (resolution 60/288) in order to enhance national, regional and international efforts to counter terrorism. It is vital, therefore, that all Member States agree on a common strategic approach to fight violent extremism and terrorism. That will not only send a clear message that such phenomena are unacceptable in all their forms and manifestations, but it will also allow States to take practical steps, both individually and collectively, to prevent and combat such phenomena. As noble as those objectives are, we must also avoid lapsing into bureaucratic routine. States must demonstrate the requisite political will and commitment to close ranks and make a determined and singular effort to overcome that challenge.

We must recognize that the building blocks for enhancing international cooperation in those areas are contained in the efforts undertaken by the General Assembly, in particular the United Nations Ad Hoc Committee on International Terrorism, which has already resulted in 14 sectoral conventions on the suppression of terrorism. I must mention in that context that, despite the support of many Member States and despite having been mandated by the General Assembly to come up with a comprehensive legal framework to fill possible gaps in the existing sectoral conventions on terrorism, there has, unfortunately, been a failure to muster the necessary political will to break the current impasse surrounding the draft comprehensive convention on international terrorism.

It is pertinent at this time to recall that the conclusion of a comprehensive convention on international terrorism was one of the key components of the plan of action to combat terrorism annexed to resolution 60/288, of September 2006. It is unfortunate that it remains unimplemented. The time has come, therefore, to move that negotiating process to a conclusion.

The role of the General Assembly over the years in standard-setting has contributed markedly to the progressive development of international law and its codification. However, it is now time to act as one body. Our efforts must not be based on business as usual. Given the threats that we face today, there is no time more urgent than the present to make this happen. We already have the building blocks needed to formulate a comprehensive response to those threats.

It is my delegation's sincere hope that we can reject silos and work together as one body to come up with a comprehensive plan of action to counter violent extremism and terrorism. My delegation is therefore pleased to welcome resolution 70/254, adopted by consensus today, aimed at further consideration of the Secretary-General's Plan of Action at the Global Counter-Terrorism Strategy Review to be held in June this year.

Ms. Al-Thani (Qatar) (*spoke in Arabic*): At the outset, I would like to thank the President for convening this meeting and the Secretary-General for his efforts in preparing the Plan of Action to Prevent Violent Extremism (A/70/674). We welcome the adoption of resolution 70/254, presented by the President, on the Secretary-General's Plan of Action.

We would like to add our voice to the statement made by the Permanent Representative of Saudi Arabia, on behalf of the Organization of Islamic Cooperation this morning (see A/70/PV.84).

The dangers emanating from violent extremism and the direct threat that it poses to international peace and security and to sustainable development mean that combatting extremism will not be achieved without an international cooperation plan that takes into consideration the raison d'être and the motives behind extremism. Violent extremism has shown by its actions that it prospers in environments in which there is impunity and the rule of law is lacking. Violent extremism is therefore seen in societies in which policies of exclusion, social marginalization, despotism and a lack of development prevail. Long-running conflicts and systematic policies of killing and persecuting people fuel extremism.

The State of Qatar rejects all forms of extremism and any attempt to link violent extremism and terrorism to a specific region, religion or ethnicity. Attempts by some, as reflected in Islamophobia, to link individual acts of violence to specific religions without evidence to support such a linkage are misleading and undermine efforts to understand the reasons behind terrorism. Desecrating religious symbols give extremists pretexts to recruit supporters.

Politicians, religious leaders, civil society and the mass media must play effective roles in efforts to combat terrorism. In that regard, we support international and regional efforts aimed at eliminating extremism and supporting human rights, the rule of law, the fight against terrorism and impunity, and the rights of people to freedom, dignity and self-determination. In the framework of the international effort to develop the Plan of Action to Prevent Violent Extremism, we emphasize the need for the Plan of Action to engage a spirit of tolerance at the national, regional and international levels.

We have been trying to put an end to violent extremismthrough the establishment of the Doha International Center for Interfaith Dialogue, which seeks to support and strengthen dialogue among representatives of different religions, and through the establishment of the Hamad Bin Khalifa Civilisation Center in Copenhagen, which strengthens peaceful cooperation and coexistence among religions.

The Plan of Action should also pay special attention to children and young people. Disregarding that sector and not providing a healthy environment in which to harness the potential of young people will make them vulnerable to be used as tools by terrorists. In that connection, Qatar is cooperating with a number of States on highlighting the issue of children and young people affected by violent terrorism and crime, and we are trying to rehabilitate and integrate them into society. To that end, the Silatech Institute in Qatar is raising awareness of youth unemployment in the Arab region and seeks to create employment opportunities for young people. We are trying to establish a partnership between Silatech and the relevant United Nations organs concerned with combating terrorism.

In conclusion, we would like to emphasize our cooperation with other actors in countering violent extremism. We are committed to tackling that challenge at the national and international levels and to participating in international efforts to combat extremism and terrorism in all their forms.

Mr. Bonser (Canada) (*spoke in French*): Canada welcomes and strongly supports the initiative of the Secretary-General in connection with today's agenda item. The United Nations is uniquely placed to bring coherence and coordination to international efforts to address violent extremism. The Plan of Action to Prevent Violent Extremism (A/70/674) recognizes that addressing violent extremism is complex and requires a comprehensive response, which must go well beyond traditional security thinking by engaging social institutions and various policy areas.

Addressing the conditions conducive to violent extremism through proactive investments and prevention efforts is essential. Canada's counter-terrorism strategy recognizes that fact, and one of its pillars seeks to address the factors that may motivate individuals to engage in terrorist activities by seeking to prevent radicalization to violence and reduce the threat and likelihood of costly intervention at a later stage. We welcome greater international focus in this area.

(*spoke in English*)

The Plan of Action's comprehensive approach makes the important linkage between deficits in governance and human rights, on the one hand, and factors that can motivate radicalization to violence, on the other. Inclusive and accountable governance fosters peaceful pluralism and diversity. Safeguarding human rights, promoting tolerance and pluralism, and reducing inequality must, therefore, be at the forefront of our efforts to prevent violent extremism.

Canada fully supports all seven priority areas identified in the Plan of Action. In addition to the focus on good governance and human rights, we share the view that promoting education, empowering youth and incorporating our young people into the solution are essential to efforts to prevent violent extremism. Other areas of engagement can also usefully inform our efforts, such as conflict-sensitive international development. Canada is actively engaged in building a comprehensive approach to addressing the drivers of violence and in maintaining the goal of inclusive development for all, in line with Sustainable Development Goal 16.

As the Plan of Action correctly recognizes, to be effective, action to address violent extremism must be taken by Member States at the national and local levels. Active community engagement through dialogue is essential. In Canada, authorities at all levels are already engaged in those areas. Canada also recognizes that prevention efforts require input from non-governmental actors, civil society and community organizations, as is outlined in the Plan of Action. The most effective approach to preventing radicalization to violence is not from the top down; rather, it begins in communities and involves working with local leaders to develop early intervention programmes.

We support the call for the development of national action plans. Canada is already engaged in a process that seeks to bring together our efforts in that area. Our Government has committed to creating an office dedicated to community outreach and counter-radicalization in order to provide national leadership on that important issue. And we are developing a national strategy on countering radicalization to violence.

As called for in the Plan of Action, Canada will continue to support regional bodies and Member States in developing their capacities to address the drivers of violent extremism. Canadian capacity-building efforts seek to bolster community resilience against radicalization to violence, to strengthen and amplify voices seeking to counter extremist narratives and to build national responses aimed at reintegrating foreign terrorist fighters.

Canada fully supports the all-of-the-United-Nations approach outlined in the Plan of Action. Ensuring coherence throughout the United Nations will be crucial for the effective implementation of the Plan of Action. Moreover, in order to avoid the duplication of efforts, United Nations actions in this field must be closely coordinated with ongoing work in other forums. For instance, the Global Counterterrorism Forum has done valuable work in community engagement and community policing.

(*spoke in French*)

We look forward to working together with the Secretariat and the international community to explore the best ways to ensure the Plan of Action's effective implementation. That will require the development of provisions for accountability and review. We would welcome a more detailed examination of the specifics of the Plan of Action's implementation, including ideas for priority-setting and accountability, in the appropriate contexts. In that connection, Canada looks forward to the upcoming conference on the Plan of Action in Geneva.

Mr. Sareer (Maldives): As we speak today, violent extremism and its more sinister handmaiden, terrorism, in various parts of the world are destroying the very values that we as modern societies hold dear: the values of human dignity, peace and security. It is escalating an already unprecedented humanitarian crisis, as millions of people are being forced from their homes. The new manifestations of terrorism pose a greater threat than ever to our international security, peace and humanity. Efforts to implement concrete actions to prevent and counter terrorism are urgent and imperative.

Today's debate is indeed very timely, and my delegation expresses its deep appreciation to the Secretary-General for his report, entitled "Plan of Action to Prevent Violent Extremism" (A/70/674). Maldives vehemently condemns all acts, methods and practices of violent extremism and terrorism in all their forms and manifestations, committed by whomever, wherever and on whatever grounds. The Maldives believes that streamlined counter-radicalization efforts must be amplified so as to ensure a lasting victory against violent extremism. Recent events related to Da'esh or the Islamic State in Iraq and the Levant, Boko Haram and other extremist factions speak to us of the immediate need to redouble our efforts at the national, regional and international levels in order to unite and harmonize our actions undertaken to counter terrorism and violent extremism.

We are increasingly reminded that the phenomenon of terrorism is not just one country's problem or just a regional problem. Terrorism knows no borders; it is pervasive and global. The problem must, therefore, be tackled as such through a unified global strategy. In order to address the interlinked and evolving nature of terrorism, we need to build strong partnerships to counter the shared threats to our security. The Government of Maldives has joined other States in a coalition to build partnerships to resolve those interlinked threats. We are also working with our international partners to enhance efforts to combat terrorism. The Government of Maldives remains committed to working with our regional and international partners through increased cooperation and international solidarity with a view to suppressing those threats.

We will not win this fight by military might alone. Winning the war on values, progress and ideology remains a big challenge. We need to allow our societies to empower people's minds and open their hearts to respect one another. We need to protect our children, enlighten them through education and empower our youth. Only then will we be able to cultivate a culture of respect that could enable the forging of a joint vision of tolerance and the rejection of terrorism. Countering terrorism is a battle that we can win only if we fight it with our minds.

As Governments, we have the responsibility to connect with our youth and present them with appropriate alternatives. In that regard, the Maldives reiterates that it recognizes youth as an asset of society. In our view, empowering youth and providing a platform for them to express their views is imperative. As a major policy priority, the Government is addressing the needs of the large youth population of our country to provide them with opportunities to realize their true potential.

We must further harness the tools we have and strengthen legal frameworks in order, in particular, to detect and disrupt the stream of foreign terrorist fighters and any terrorist-related travel. Since the adoption of the landmark Security Council resolution 2178 (2014), the Government of Maldives has embarked on a number of concrete actions to curb the stream of foreign terrorist fighters and to ensure the safety and security of all Maldivians.

Consistent with the spirit of resolution 2178 (2014), in 2015, the Maldives enacted a new anti-terrorism act, under which it is a serious criminal offence for any Maldivian to travel to fight in terrorist wars on foreign soil. The Government remains vigilant in monitoring suspected acts of terror so as to prevent terrorism and tackle conditions conducive to terrorism. Furthermore, the Maldives has also enacted the Prevention of Money-Laundering and Terrorism-Financing Act, which criminalizes money-laundering and terrorist financing in the Maldives. Both of those key acts provide a robust framework that focuses on preventive measures to address violent extremism.

Islam is increasingly associated with terror and extremism. Islamophobia represents a spectrum of negative expressions and continues to rapidly expand. The Maldives, too, has not been immune to the tentacles of radicalized Islam. Efforts must be intensified to build bridges among our communities and promote our shared values of peace, compassion and tolerance. We should strengthen those actions that counter and eliminate false connotations regarding religions, ethnicity and culture.

The terrorism we see today in the world defies all logic. It relies on mindless and vicious violence, perpetrated most often against the weak and the marginalized, against ethnic and religious minorities, and against defenceless societies. The Maldives believes that violent extremism and terrorism should have no place in our modern societies and should not go unpunished. The perpetrators should be held accountable as soon as possible, and their victims should be protected and empowered. We believe that the best and strongest defence against terrorism is to present a unified and cohesive front against that menace, which threatens not only our coexistence, but all civilized ethics. The Maldives stands committed and ready to work with the international community in that battle.

Mr. Alemu (Ethiopia): I wish to join others in expressing appreciation to the President for convening today's meetings to deliberate on the Secretary-General's Plan of Action to Prevent Violent Extremism (A/70/674). We thank the Secretary-General for taking this initiative at a time when the world is confronting growing threats of terrorism and violent extremism, which represent a shared challenge that requires a shared and collective response from States and the international community as a whole.

The United Nations Global Counter-Terrorism Strategy (resolution 60/288) was adopted with the view to promoting comprehensive, coordinated and consistent responses at the national, regional and international levels. A decade after its adoption, however, the question is to what extent have we been able to translate the Strategy into concrete actions? At the risk of prejudging the outcome of the review of the Strategy, we regret that its implementation has been far from effective. And yet — and this is to state the obvious — the nature of the threat we face has evolved and expanded over the past decade, underscoring the need for systematic and practical cooperation at all levels to address it.

In that regard, the Secretary-General's Plan of Action needs to be qualitatively different from the Global Counter-Terrorism Strategy, given that the Plan of Action is called upon to deliver concrete results, which can be achieved only if there is genuine and effective cooperation based on equal treatment. There is no rationale that justifies failure to cooperate effectively in the fight against terrorism and violent extremism; what is required is not lip service, but concrete and practical cooperation.

It is no exaggeration to state that terrorist groups and their affiliates seem to cooperate better among themselves than do Member States, even though they profess to fight terrorism. Terrorist groups have established networks across many regions and effectively utilize the Internet and social media to spread their extremist ideology and recruit foreign fighters.

It is impossible to counter the growing threat posed by those terrorists and extremists without forging practical cooperation and strengthening coordination, including the sharing of intelligence, the enhancement of border security, the establishment of mechanisms for cooperation and the exchange of valuable experience between and among the States Members of the United Nations. Nonetheless, we have to admit that the hypocrisy and double standards manifest in our approach so far have been undermining our efforts to respond to the threat posed by terrorism in an effective, coherent and coordinated manner. Therefore, if we are to have a tangible impact on the ground, our approach has to change. The particular distinction that is made between terrorism at the local and international levels needs to be overcome.

In the regions most affected by threats of terrorism and violent extremism, it is absolutely critical that there be regional coordination to address the specific challenges that terrorist organizations pose in their respective areas of operation. I am not sure how many of our regions have effective mechanisms of that type and how much the United Nations has supported them so far. Obviously, the United Nations cannot do much to counter terrorism and violent extremism without cooperating with regional coordination mechanisms. It is therefore crucial to provide those mechanisms with the necessary support and build their capacities. We believe that the United Nations can contribute a great deal by doing so, and we are pleased to note that that fact has been recognized in the Plan of Action.

Finally, I would like to reiterate Ethiopia's commitment to enhancing effective international cooperation in combating the scourge of terrorism. In that context, we in Ethiopia have already established practical cooperation and coordination of efforts with countries in our subregion through the sharing of intelligence and the exchange of valuable experience in the fight against terrorism.

I wish to conclude my remarks by once again emphasizing the importance of practical and action-oriented cooperation and coordination of our efforts aimed at countering terrorism and violent extremism. We should do a better job than the terrorists in coordinating our actions, if we really want to achieve meaningful results.

Mrs. Quiel Murcia (Panama) (*spoke in Spanish*): First of all, I welcome the initiative of the Secretary-General in presenting his Plan of Action to Prevent Violent Extremism (A/70/674). Violent extremism is a scourge that respects no boundaries, no religious beliefs and no nationalities. Indeed, its negative effects on very diverse populations pose a challenge to everyone.

Today's debate could not be more relevant, as it comes at a time when humanitarian crises and forced displacements are consequences of violent extremism and terrorism that have only recently upset countries, regardless of the flags they fly, and have claimed countless human lives. Because of the number of victims and the degree of suffering, the phenomenon is generating so much concern that, setting an historic precedent, the leaders of the Catholic and Orthodox Churches will meet in our region in just a few hours from now to address this threat in the name of peace and understanding.

With a vision of global responsibility and a desire to promote peace and human rights, Panama has expressed support for the international efforts to prevent the financing of terrorism, which is seen as a threat to humankind. We therefore welcome the initiative of the Government of Switzerland to hold an international conference on the Plan of Action to Prevent Violent Extremism in Geneva on 7 and 8 April. In that regard, Panama welcomes the criteria in the Secretary-General's Plan of Action, which recommends to States that they draw up national plans of action in certain priority areas to prevent violent extremism.

The 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development (resolution 70/1) — with which we are seeking to eliminate social inequalities in order to establish a world that is free of extreme poverty but also free of fear and violence and in which all people can develop their potential — must become a reality. Therefore the 2030 Agenda and the Plan of Action should be complementary. The promotion of peaceful, tolerant and inclusive societies is an imperative. Inclusive development that promotes equality and, above all, respect for human rights, democracy, human development, gender equality and the growing participation of women and young people is a responsibility for all States. We welcome the Secretary-General's offer to make available to States the platform of the United Nations agencies with a view to supporting national efforts for this purppose.

The United Nations Global Counter-Terrorism Strategy (resolution 60/288), which the General Assembly adopted unanimously 10 years ago, specifically addresses the issue of prevention and provides for the balanced implementation of its four pillars, which emphasize the need to ensure respect for human rights for all and the rule of law in combating terrorism. The Plan of Action presented by the Secretary-General undoubtedly supports the implementation of the Global Strategy. My country wishes to recognize the leadership of the Organization and its commitment to the role that it must play in support of States' efforts to combat violent extremism and identify the root causes that motivate such extremism to the detriment of our societies.

Panama repudiates all acts of violence, regardless of their origin, which violate the norms of international law as the sole foundation of international peace and security. We welcome the Secretary-General's efforts to implement the Plan of Action.

I conclude by reiterating the call for all nations to achieve a consensus on specific actions to counter radicalization and violent extremism, while upholding democratic values and a vision that contains the principles on which we can build peaceful, tolerant and inclusive societies.

Mr. Drobnjak (Croatia): Croatia aligns itself with the statement delivered by the observer of the European Union (see A/70/PV.84). I will make some additional remarks in my national capacity.

Croatia welcomes the Plan of Action to Prevent Violent Extremism (A/70/674) and highly commends the Secretary-General's efforts and leadership in that field. In our view, the Plan of Action represents a consistent move forward and coherently supplements earlier established processes. It is, simply put, an important step in the right direction.

Croatia has always been a supporter of the central role of the United Nations in global counter-terrorism efforts and an advocate of the multifaceted implementation of the United Nations Global Counter-Terrorism Strategy (resolution 60/288). We agree that, in order for the fight against terrorism to be successful, security-based counter-terrorism measures must go hand in hand with softer, preventive actions that address the drivers of violent extremism conducive to terrorism. The United Nations has a unique position in those activities, and its leading role should be further promoted, especially in assisting Member States in countering, preventing and mitigating the disturbing impacts of violent extremism on peace and security, sustainable development, the rule of law and humanitarian action.

Croatia welcomes the recommendation that Member States should consider developing national plans of action to prevent violent extremism and address the local drivers of it. Country-specific conditions and circumstances have to be taken fully into account. While we contemplate the problem from the global perspective, action is needed on the local level. The development of regional and subregional plans of action, especially in the most vulnerable regions, should be based on commonalities and possible synergies in order to better reflect region-specific conditions, while at the same time avoiding any duplications in that regard.

Although the risk of violent extremism conducive to terrorism has been low in Croatia, we are committed to investing efforts in prevention. Last year, the Croatian Government adopted a new national strategy for the prevention and suppression of terrorism, which, like the previous one, contains elements dealing with the prevention of extremism. This year, we plan to adopt a new action plan for the implementation of the national strategy, which will also incorporate the prevention of violent extremism, taking into account the recommendations set forth in the Secretary-General's Plan of Action.

We appreciate the fact that the Plan of Action provides the basis for the first-ever whole-of-United Nations approach to support national, regional and global efforts against violent extremism and to implement key parts of the Global Counter-Terrorism Strategy. It is crucial for United Nations entities to enhance their coordination in that regard, promote the most promising initiatives and adequately address rapidly evolving challenges.

Croatia also supports the interdisciplinary all-of-society approach taken by the Plan of Action, which is needed in order to build peaceful and inclusive societies. With the full engagement of all stakeholders — Governments, local communities, international organizations and agencies, civil society, religious communities, academia, the private sector, the media and, most of all, the citizens themselves — we will achieve results in that field. We need to strive for a harmonized functioning of our communities so that we can target the underlying socioeconomic, political and ideological drivers of terrorism and violent extremism and build resilience and social cohesion.

Let us underline once more that violent extremism recognizes no borders of a moral, religious or State provenance. It must therefore not be associated with any nationality, ethnicity, race or religion. This menace poses a threat to all countries and all peoples, regardless of their background. However, in the light of the diversity of societies, terrorists and extremists tend to target social rifts in an effort to make them deeper and more divisive. We are particularly concerned at the fact that some terrorist groups, especially the Islamic State in the Levant/Da'esh, deliberately target their propaganda at Muslim communities, particularly youth. It is therefore of paramount importance to step up the fight against false interpretations and perceptions of religion, including the attempts to use any religion as a justification for violence.

In that vein, Croatia, as a predominantly Catholic country, is especially proud of the exemplary level of inclusion and integration of the Muslim community in Croatia, which is also engaged in and dedicated to fighting violent extremist narratives. We are glad to be able to commend many positive developments and examples of cooperation between the Croatian Muslim community and the State and local authorities that enhance the overall cohesion and richness of our society. It is worth mentioning that in April we will celebrate the one hundredth anniversary of the official recognition of the Muslim community in Croatia.

Let me conclude by saying that we are certain and confident that the Plan of Action will help ensure a more comprehensive implementation of the United Nations Global Counter-Terrorism Strategy. We believe that we have the right tools and instruments at our disposal for concerted action to counter the scourge of violent extremism around the globe. In that vein, we again highly commend the Secretary-General's efforts, and we welcome the adoption of today's resolution 70/254.

Mr. Momen (Bangladesh): Bangladesh appreciates the efforts of the President to ensure today's adoption of resolution 70/254 in order to take forward the Secretary-General's Plan of Action to Prevent Violent Extremism (A/70/674).

We align ourselves with the statement delivered by the Permanent Representative of the Kingdom of Saudi Arabia on behalf of the Organization of Islamic Cooperation (see A/70/PV.84).

Bangladesh considers the Plan of Action to be a sound basis for our collective, integrated and strategic work on preventing violent extremism. We detect many commonalities between our national policies and actions on preventing violent extremism under the resolute guidance of our Prime Minister Sheikh Hasina and the seven-point Plan of Action outlined by the Secretary-General. Bangladesh maintains an unequivocal zero-tolerance approach to terrorism and violent extremism in all their forms and manifestations. We believe that terrorists and violent extremists do not have any religion, creed or caste. We remain committed to ensuring that our territory is not used for terrorist activities directed at other States, including our neighbours.

Bangladesh considers that the Secretary-General's Plan of Action contains a useful portfolio of analytical tools and recommendations. It allows Member States to identify the key drivers of violent extremism in their respective contexts and thus to calibrate their appropriate responses at the national, subregional and regional levels. The Secretary-General has developed his Plan of Action in relation to the United Nations Global Counter-Terrorism Strategy (resolution 60/288), especially its pillars I and IV.

For us, the Plan of Action aims to leverage the agenda for the prevention of violent extremism to contribute in the larger context to comprehensive, multidimensional and effective counter-terrorism strategies, and not to replace them. As we see it, the prevention of violent extremism can be pursued in the interface between security and development, while being anchored in human rights principles. The prevention of violent extremism does offer the international community an avenue to avoid the potential pitfalls of overreliance or singular reliance on a military-based approach to counter-terrorism.

Prevention is supposedly the buzzword of the United Nations peace and security agenda at the moment. There is perhaps a growing convergence on giving much-needed attention to preventing the underlying drivers of intolerance, violence, radicalization and terrorism to robustly complement the work of the Organization to end conflicts and defeat terrorism.

A consensus, however, will remain elusive as long as there is a perceived imbalance in the identification of the real drivers and processes of radicalization and violent extremism.

We see no purpose in denying some of the fundamental root causes that continue to give a steady supply and sustenance to the toxic messages being peddled by certain segments of violent extremists. The present Plan of Action refers to the potential impacts of foreign occupation, protracted conflicts and systematic human rights abuses, but it shies away from identifying certain obvious, particular cases, as it has done with many others. We can opt for partial narratives to address the malaise of radicalization and violent extremism, but that may only serve to embolden those who thrive on their own interpretation of events, no matter how misguided their logic or objectives may be.

Likewise, the Plan of Action tends to focus on the local drivers of violent extremism, but it shows rather scant understanding of the external factors that profoundly influence the local narratives. The collective grievances, ideological imports and illicit financial flows that permeate through national borders continue to fuel the vested agenda of the local actors, including violent extremists.

The role of modern technologies, particularly the Internet, merits our special attention when it comes to tackling violent extremism. It would be somewhat futile to address the spread of violent extremist messaging online only through the binaries of security versus access and privacy. We need to find a common space for different groups of actors to converge and cooperate in the face of a shared global threat. Even if it takes time, Member States should seriously consider reviewing the existing legal and normative frameworks to further facilitate mutual assistance and cooperation, with the active involvement, commitment and responsiveness of the private sector.

Bangladesh stands ready to draw on the Secretary-General's Plan of Action and to customize it in line with our national circumstances and priorities. In order to address the upstream challenges of violent extremism at the grass roots, we have recently joined the Global Community Engagement and Resilience Fund. As a pilot beneficiary country, our sustained investment in human development has been critical in reducing poverty, enhancing women's social mobility, creating education and employment opportunities, especially for the youth, and strengthening human rights and the rule of law. Bangladesh's impressive achievement in women's empowerment has been a critical factor in resisting extremist elements in our midst. In our aspiration to build a knowledge-based society, we have made it a mission to infuse a culture of peace in the minds of our children and youth.

Bangladesh wishes to see our deliberations concerning counter-terrorism and preventing violent extremism be contextualized within the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development (resolution 70/1), since, apart from climate change, there is perhaps no greater threat to our collective, sustainable development pursuits than terrorism and violent extremism.

Mr. Taula (New Zealand): New Zealand is pleased to join this debate today.

Violent extremist groups such as the Islamic State in the Levant and Boko Haram threaten international security, and for an increasing number of communities they also threaten all three pillars of the United Nations: peace, development and human rights. The Secretary-General is right when he says that this is an affront to the purposes and principles of the Charter of the United Nations. He is also right to call on the General Assembly to speak in a united voice. We need to speak out not only against violent extremists, but also for the values of this Organization. The Secretary-General's Plan of Action to Prevent Violent Extremism (A/70/674) is an important first step in finding this stronger, more united voice.

But most importantly, we need to act. Many of the recommendations in the Secretary-General's report, such as greater community engagement, youth empowerment and measures to counter marginalization, reflect activities New Zealand already carries out and actively promotes.

We welcome the flexible approach in the Plan. It encourages States to select, from a range of recommendations, those actions that fit best in their specific context. The Plan rightly covers a broad range of activities beyond the traditional deradicalization or counter-extremism programmes. We hope this upstream approach will help us to move away from an overly security-focused approach to tackling the conditions that breed extremism. In New Zealand the most effective programmes have been those that do not solely target violent extremism but have a broader, more positive a.m, such as supporting inclusive communities and resilient individuals.

We also see important emerging issues, notably the challenges posed by returning foreign terrorist fighters and their rehabilitation. Many States are grappling with that, including New Zealand. While the returnee issue is often seen through the lens of a threat posed to Western countries, it is directly relevant to many countries around the world, including those of North Africa and the Middle East, and especially countries already in conflict. The issue of returnees warrants further exploration, and we believe the United Nations can provide an important forum for discussing best practices.

Many States require targeted support and capacity-building to implement programmes to prevent violent extremism. The challenges are greatest in countries that are already suffering from instability and conflict. We are pleased to see the Secretary-General recommending that, in line with their mandates, United Nations peace operations should integrate the prevention of violent extremism into their activities. The issue deserves immediate attention by the Security Council.

Many actors and initiatives are already working to prevent violent extremism. New Zealand is pleased to be a member of several of them, such as the Global Counterterrorism Forum. When it comes to effective funding platforms, we are also pleased to be on the board of the Global Community Engagement and Resilience Fund. The United Nations has an important role to play in that crowded space, but it needs to better leverage its comparative advantage, by which we mean better utilizing the United Nations unparalleled convening power and presence on the ground in 180 countries, as well as enhancing United Nations mechanisms for targeting capacity-building and, where necessary, employing the Security Council's ability to establish a common legal framework to support common action.

The Plan of Action to Prevent Violent Extremism is another example of the United Nations utilizing that comparative advantage. We need to ensure that the One United Nations ambition in that plan and the leadership shown by the Secretary-General are realized. Just as Member States need to focus on what actions we will take, the United Nations needs to translate its commitments into sustainable and coordinated action.

Mr. Pedersen (Norway): We wish to inform the President and to notify the interpreters that Norway will not read its full statement.

Norway welcomes and strongly supports the Secretary-General's Plan of Action to Prevent Violent Extremism. Violent extremism can never be legitimized, regardless of political, ideological or religious motivations. Nor should violent extremism be associated with any particular religion, nationality or system of belief.

As the report of the Secretary-General (A/70/674) highlights, in 2011 the Norwegian terrorist Breivik, inspired by right-wing extremist ideology, killed 77 people, mostly youth. It also illustrates with uncomfortable clarity that violent extremism recognizes no borders, no cultures, no religions and no ethnic groups. It is a phenomenon that affects us all, and it can only be tackled by us all. No country is immune.

The threat from groups such as the Islamic State in Iraq and the Levant, Boko Haram and Al-Shabaab continues to rise as such groups commit atrocities and attack innocent people in all corners of the world. The unprecedented high number of foreign terrorist fighters travelling to areas of conflict and instability is of particular concern. Not only are they wreaking further havoc in already fragile countries and areas, but they also pose a threat upon returning to their home countries, or as they travel to other areas of instability, with the aim of radicalizing others.

The international community must adapt to the changing landscape of violent extremism. That is why the Plan of Action to Prevent Violent Extremism is timely and much needed. Furthermore, the Plan appropriately seeks to highlight and strengthen pillars I and IV of the 2006 United Nations Global Counter-terrorism Strategy (resolution 60/288) with regard to tackling conditions conducive to terrorism and ensuring respect for human rights and the rule of law. I would like to highlight three areas of the Plan that Norway finds to be of particular importance.

First, national action plans on preventing violent extremism are important tools for setting priorities to comprehensively and effectively tackle local drivers of violent extremism. Norway adopted its first plan of action to prevent violent extremism in 2010. It has since been revised, and the current plan is a dynamic document that is updated regularly to respond to the rapidly changing landscape of threat, including the issue of returning foreign terrorist fighters. The plan of action takes a whole-of-government approach, with nine different ministries involved. That broad approach has provided the plan with legitimacy and credibility, and it has ensured its effectiveness.

Secondly, the Plan of Action seeks to empower important groups such as communities, cities, civil society, youth and women. Although Governments have the primary responsibility for preventing violent extremism, they need to work closely with other groups, including civil society.

At the Conference on Countering Violent Extremism held in Oslo in June of last year, Norway initiated the launch of two civil society networks. The first is YouthCAN — a network of youth working against violent extremism, including by producing counter and alternative narratives. The second is the alliance of women's organizations working against violent extremism, which Norway supports.

The third area I would to highlight is that national action plans must recognize the importance of dialogue, conflict prevention, good governance, the rule of law and human rights. That is particularly important in areas of conflict and instability. Poverty is not the sole cause of violent extremism. Nevertheless, marginalization, whether economic, social or political, is often an important element in the process of radicalization that results in violent extremism. We need a comprehensive approach to address the conditions conducive to violent extremism. We must address both the "push" and "p-ull" factors.

The Secretary-General's Plan of Action is a call to action. We as Member States have the primary responsibility for implementing the Plan. We must form new partnerships with civil society, youth and women. But we also need a strong United Nations to show global leadership. We need a United Nations that is fit for purpose and has sufficient resources to do its part. The review of the Global Counter-Terrorism Strategy later this year will provide us with a unique opportunity to discuss national and regional implementation of the Strategy and the Plan of Action. It will also provide an opportunity to ensure that the United Nations is adequately equipped to provide the requisite strong, cohesive and high-level leadership to effectively coordinate its efforts to counter terrorism and prevent violent extremism.

Mr. Mahmadaminov (Tajikistan): Terrorism is a complex social and political phenomenon, multifaceted and diverse in its manifestations. The increasing scope of international terrorism, especially in such forms as acts of terror, religious extremism, nationalistic terrorism, poses a real threat to society, not only to individual countries but to the entire world community.

Sad events such as the recent attacks in Paris and Bamako, as well as other acts of terrorism, have been occurring with tragic regularity in certain countries, including in the city of Kunduz in Afghanistan. The terrorist attacks in Ankara and Beirut, explosions in mosques in Yemen and Pakistan, the explosion of the Russian aircraft over the Sinai peninsula and many other tragic events force us to unite our efforts in the face of a common threat, that is, international terrorism.

Today more than ever before, the international community needs to work closely together to develop constructive approaches to address these issues in order to prevent such acts of barbarism in our homes. We all know that currently international terrorist organizations in the Middle East and North Africa have been gradually building up their capacity, consistently strengthening ties with radical organizations that operate in the territory of member countries of the Commonwealth of Independent States.

Terrorism and extremism have become serious global threats that cause destruction, killings and the mass exodus of people. All such occurrences and events offer vivid proof of the fact that the number of this century's challenges and new threats to human civilization are constantly increasing, posing serious danger to the security of both small and large countries throughout the world, and even to the destiny of all humankind.

Such events have once again proved that on the one hand, terrorism and extremism are serious global threats, aptly called a plague of the century. On the other hand, their impact shows that terrorism does not respect borders and does not have a motherland, nationality or religion, and that poses a threat to the global community and the lives of all residents of the planet. This outrageous phenomenon has nothing to do with a religion, particularly with the true religion of Islam. Acts of terror are committed by the enemies of that holy religion, usually affecting Islamic countries and the entire Muslim world.

Therefore, Tajikistan categorically and resolutely condemns international terrorism, which constitutes a key challenge to global security, in all its forms and manifestations. We support the consolidation of the efforts of the international community in this area at the global, regional and national levels. Tajikistan supports the Security Council's relevant resolutions as a legal basis for international cooperation in countering terrorism.

It is action at the local, national and regional levels that will have the most impact when combating terrorism and extremism. The Government of Tajikistan, taking into consideration the seriousness of terrorist threats to the security and stability of the country and to its social and economic development, has taken decisive and comprehensive measures to prevent and combat terrorism and to eradicate the factors that give rise to terrorism and contribute to its spread. The relevant law enforcement and public agencies of Tajikistan have been tasked with developing a national strategy for Tajikistan on countering terrorism and extremism for the period from 2016 to 2020. Furthermore, they are working on a proposal to establish a centre for fighting information technology crimes and cyberterrorism.

We strongly believe that the central role in this struggle should belong to the United Nations, in particular the United Nations Global Counter-Terrorism Strategy, which is a unique tool for the intensification of efforts to combat terrorism at the national, regional and international levels. Efforts should be focused on eliminating the military infrastructure of international terrorism and blocking its channels of political, military and financial support, as well as on preventing the use of the Internet for the radicalization of ideas and for recruitment and propaganda for extremism and violence. Expanding the cooperation between the Security Council Committee established pursuant to resolution 1373 (2001), concerning counter-terrorism, and regional organizations on this issue will be also instrumental and timely in this process.

Given those considerations, my delegation finds the report of the Secretary-General on the Plan of Action to Prevent Violent Extremism (A/70/674) — which calls for concerted efforts to counter violent extremism, broader responses, early engagement and action to address the drivers of violent extremism — to be a very useful guidance tool for Member States to work on further addressing such negative phenomena as terrorism and extremism. We refer in particular to the report's recommendations that call upon Member States to develop national and regional plans of action to prevent violent extremism, mobilize resources, strengthen trust between Government institutions and communities, call for dialogue, engage with communities, empower youth and women, develop skills and employment facilities, and invest in education.

As a country that has experienced acts of terror on its own territory at first hand, Tajikistan would like to emphasize its willingness to engage with the international community in the fight against this phenomenon, and invites all stakeholders to work together in order to develop constructive approaches to tackling this problem.

Mr. Nkoloi (Botswana): I thank you, Sir, for convening this important debate on the Plan of Action to Prevent Violent Extremism. We commend the President for continuing to engage us in finding ways to tackle this global scourge.

This debate is taking place at a critical time when the international community is under siege by organized terrorist groups that commit the most heinous crimes with impunity. Violent extremism is real. It is here. In our schools and neighbourhoods, in cities, oceans and skies, the story is the same. We are under siege.

Botswana strongly condemns acts of terrorism in all their shapes and forms, and we wish to reiterate our unwavering support for efforts by the international community to safeguard international peace and security. Over the years we have been following with horror and disbelief the emergence of violent extremism and extremist groups, as well as foreign terrorist fighters, in all corners of the world. We all know they have no regard for human life. It is also clear and certain that no nation can single-handedly fight or root out organized terror. We therefore need a comprehensive global approach; that is the only way to tackle this problem.

There is no doubt that the existence of groups such as the Islamic State in Iraq and the Sham, Boko Haram, Al-Shabaab and many others poses a blatant challenge to international peace and security. During the past year alone, for instance, those savage groups have committed atrocious acts against humankind, ranging from bombing neighbourhoods and schools, beheading innocent civilians and carrying out inhuman and degrading torture against innocent people.

In that connection, we wish to thank the Secretary-General for his proposed Plan of Action to Prevent Violent Extremism (A/70/674), which is the basis for our discussions today. We also duly take note of the recommendations contained therein.

We welcome the Plan of Action and believe that it serves as a starting point on which we can further discuss how best to implement its elements. We believe that the promotion and protection of human rights should be the starting point for countering terrorism and violent extremism. Needless to say, despite its mandated responsibilities, the burden of responsibility for the maintenance of international peace and security does not lie solely with the United Nations, but also with States and citizens We therefore call on the international community to scale up efforts aimed at cooperation and assistance to strengthen institutions that promote good governance and the rule of law at the regional and international levels. That can go a long way in eliminating the breeding grounds for terrorism.

Acts of terrorism taking place throughout the world are a clear demonstration that violent extremism in all its forms and shapes has no respect for national boundaries and sovereignty.

Mr. Yaremenko (Ukraine): Let me start by thanking you, Sir, for having convened this meeting to discuss the Secretary-General's Plan of Action to Prevent Violent Extremism (A/70/674). Ukraine also welcomes the adoption of resolution 70/254, which endorses this timely initiative.

The year 2015 was marked by a number of important events that placed the issue of the prevention of violent extremism high on the global agenda. It started with the White House summit to counter violent extremism, hosted by United States President Barack Obama, which was followed by a number of regional conferences, and the leaders summit on countering the Islamic State in Iraq and the Levant and violent extremism, held on the margins of the seventieth session of the General Assembly. We would like to extend our gratitude to Secretary-General Ban Ki-moon for his personal commitment to this goal and for his Plan of Action, which has capped all those endeavours. It is a highly anticipated initiative, aimed at elaborating a comprehensive approach with long-term actions to address violent extremism and its root causes.

Both violent extremism and its gravest form, terrorism, threaten our core values and principles, including human rights, the rule of law, democracy, equal opportunity and freedom. Moreover, the negative impact of violent extremist ideology, propagated throughout the world by terrorist entities such as the Islamic State in the Levant and its affiliates, raises our concern. It goes without saying that fighting violent extremism only through military means does not have a long-lasting effect. Eliminating its manifestations in one region but failing to remove the root causes that maintain it will merely entail its outbreak somewhere else in the world.

Only combining more nuanced and comprehensive measures to counter and prevent terrorism — measures that address governance deficit and promote social development and dialogue, respect for the rule of law and human rights, strategic communications, the engagement of women and youth, investment in human capital and job creation, education, public-private partnerships — will help us to reduce the appeal of and support for extremist groups, while enhancing resilience against them. Those elements are included into the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development (resolution 70/1) and reflected in the recently adopted Security Council resolution 2250 (2015), on youth, peace and security, as well as in other relevant United Nations instruments.

We fully agree with the Secretary-General that, in a long-term perspective,

> "the creation of open, equitable, inclusive and pluralist societies, based on the full respect of human rights and with economic opportunities for all represents the most tangible and meaningful alternative to violent extremism and the most promising strategy for rendering it unattractive." (*A/70/674, para. 7*)

With that in mind, Ukraine has recently adopted its national human rights strategy and implementation plan, which, with existing legislative measures, are aimed at building a harmonious society and preventing radicalization. Certainly, there is no one-size-fits-all solution for achieving that goal. But in our view, our collective response to this threat should be focused on addressing the underlying factors that provide opportunities for violent extremism to flourish, such as corruption and poor governance, marginalization and discrimination that may cause mass grievances, human rights violations and prolonged and unresolved conflicts. With regard to the latter, we resolutely condemn any acts of external meddling aimed at escalating motiveless tensions within a society, leading to an outbreak of conflict, and, at the same time, any type of incitement, including, inter alia, by providing support to and financing violent extremists.

Ukraine, like no other country, takes seriously the threat posed by violent extremism and terrorism, being a target of the aggression of the Russian Federation, which started in February 2014 with the occupation of Crimea and continued with military operations in the Donbas region of Ukraine. The terrorist component in the undeclared war against Ukraine is clearly visible and has become an important phenomenon in the everyday life of the occupied areas of the Donetsk and Luhansk regions of Ukraine. The Russian-backed terrorist seizure of control of certain areas of the Donetsk and Luhansk regions in April and May 2014 was followed by the massive violation of human rights, including taking hostages, torture, the disappearance and killing of loyal Ukrainian citizens and the expropriation of State and private property, including administrative premises and business and trade locations.

It is obvious that without the significant financial, material and military assistance from the aggressor State, the territories not under the control of the Government would not even be capable of surviving. Therefore, despite all international efforts, the Russian Federation continues to export terrorism to Ukraine by supplying weapons, including heavy arms, to the illegal armed groups, and training their members and organizing the recruitment of former Russian military and law-enforcement servicemen. They are transferred to the eastern region of Ukraine in order to strengthen the combat capabilities of local terrorists.

We took note of a number of credible recommendations in the Plan of Action relating to the efforts of the Member States in preventing violent extremism. However, there is less reflection on how the United Nations might more effectively mainstream our joint efforts through its instruments that can allow more long-term and sustainable engagement at the national level. Therefore, we expect the active engagement of all the relevant United Nations actors in this process, in terms of providing us with full support from the United Nations side in comprehensive guidance and technical support programmes.

Ukraine supports the call for further consideration of the Plan of Action, both during the review process of the United Nations Global Counter-Terrorism Strategy in June and in other relevant international forums. We commend the initiative of the Government of Switzerland to host an international conference on the Plan of Action to Prevent Violent Extremism in Geneva on 7 and 8 April 2016. We look forward to extensive expert and high-level discussions on exploring the possibilities for the United Nations and its Member States to redouble their joint efforts in responding to the evolving threats of violent extremism.

Mr. Suárez Moreno (Bolivarian Republic of Venezuela) (*spoke in Spanish*): The Bolivarian Republic of Venezuela thanks the President for convening this plenary meeting of the General Assembly to discuss a subject to which my country attaches particular importance, and for his good offices in facilitating the submission of the recently adopted consensus resolution 70/254.

The world has seen with astonishment how recourse to violence and terrorism to subjugate various societies, civilizations, religions and beliefs has taken on innovative forms, although deep down they are still the result of practices rooted in intolerance, sectarianism and violent extremism. Terrorism and violent extremism are now problems with a global reach that blatantly threaten international peace and security. Among other things, proof of that includes today's unprecedented threat posed by the self-styled Islamic State, into which at least 34 terrorist organizations from different regions of the world — not just the Middle East and North Africa — have been incorporated, beside the fact that more than 30,000 people, including women and children, from at least 100 countries all around the world have such terrorist groups.

That is why it is important for the international community to act collectively and decisively to prevent, combat and effectively eliminate terrorism in all its forms and manifestations, including violent extremism. That should be a straightforward struggle in which the provisions set out in international instruments and the relevant resolutions of both the General Assembly and the Security Council must be complied with fully, not in a selective manner — particularly those prohibiting the transfer of weapons, financing, training and the provision of safe harbour to terrorist groups.

The Bolivarian Republic of Venezuela has taken due note of the recommendations contained in the proposed Secretary-General's Plan of Action to Prevent Violent

Extremism (A/70/674), which we are considering today. We are particularly pleased that this initiative is framed both within the item on the United Nations Global Counter-Terrorism Strategy and the agenda item entitled "Culture of peace". We believe that the Organization should use this preventive approach with greater regularity in its efforts to contribute to the fight against violent extremism when it leads to terrorism, whenever it threatens international peace and security and has clear detrimental effect on the purposes and principles of the Charter of the United Nations.

In that regard, we particularly welcome the fact that the proposed Secretary-General's Plan of Action includes two aspects that are fundamental for my country, namely, addressing the causes that lead to violent extremism, and the need to achieve political solutions to protracted conflicts. Similarly, we share the call of the Secretary-General for the development of national plans of action, following a multidimensional approach and with the participation of all State institutions, because we recognize that there is no single solution to those problems; each case has its peculiarities and is unlike any other.

Experience teaches us that terrorist groups thrive on despair, injustice, frustration, the lack of opportunities and the denial of human rights and fundamental freedoms to promote their criminal agenda — in some cases a political agenda — based on hatred, intolerance, sectarianism and violent extremism. We therefore believe that the international response requires addressing the conditions conducive to the spread of terrorism in the world so as to develop effective and innovative strategies to counter extremist and terrorist narratives and foster critical thinking in our societies in order to prevent radicalization, recruitment and mobilization of both human and economic resources.

Moreover, we believe that the long-term solution to the threats posed by violent extremism today necessarily involves the political settlement of conflicts in countries such as Syria, Libya, Iraq and Palestine. Those protracted crises further exacerbate conflicts and serve as a breeding ground for violent extremism. They encourage transnational organized crime and facilitate the flow, financing and training of foreign terrorist fighters, thereby enhancing the ability of terrorist organizations to act.

My country believes that the fight against terrorism and violent extremism must take place in the framework of international cooperation, in accordance with existing international and regional instruments in this sphere, including the purposes and principles of the Charter of the United Nations and the rules of international law, in full respect for human rights, fundamental freedoms and the rule of law. Otherwise, it would be radicalization that would be promoted.

Although we are very grateful to the Secretary-General for his initiative — which we are sure has the laudable goal of strengthening the support of the United Nations system for Member States in dealing with, inter alia, the underlying causes of violent extremism — my delegation has certain observations to make on the course of action to address the considerations and recommendations set out in his proposed Plan of Action.

Venezuela is of the view that the consideration of the Plan of Action to Prevent Violent Extremism presented to us today should be take place in separate discussion tracks among States Members of the Organization, with the purpose of debating the recommendations made therein in the framework of intergovernmental negotiations and adoption by this multilateral forum, if so decided.

The presentation of the Plan of Action is quite timely, considering that during the month of June the General Assembly will review the United Nations Global Counter-Terrorism Strategy. That is why we believe that that will be the most relevant occasion to take up the recommendations of the Secretary-General and harmonize them with the Strategy, in the interest of avoiding duplication of effort and the adoption of parallel initiatives. In that connection, we believe that the draft Secretary-General's Plan of Action includes valuable elements that form part of several of the central pillars of the Strategy and that could in fact complement it.

Finally, we believe that the international community must continue to work on the development, implementation and strengthening of strategies adapted to each case, in order to neutralize terrorist groups' ability to act and the narratives inciting violent extremism. In that regard, we believe that the adoption of a future international convention against terrorism would complement the set of existing international legal instruments in facilitating a definition, including of violent extremism, that would strengthen consensus on the subject.

Mr. Tin (Myanmar): My delegation wishes to thank the President for organizing today's formal debate on the Secretary-General's Plan of Action to Prevent Violent Extremism (A/70/674). We also thank the Secretary-General and the President of the General Assembly for their earlier engagement with the Member States on how to move forward with this important Plan of Action.

The emergence of violent extremist terrorist groups is posing a most serious threat to international peace and security. We are all appalled at the atrocities committed by violent extremist groups that inflict suffering on innocent civilians in many parts of the world. No country is immune from the threat of the spread of violent extremism and terrorism. Terrorist attacks can happen anywhere and at any time. My delegation therefore fully shares the growing concern about this serious challenge to humankind.

We also fully recognize the urgent need for the international community to undertake joint efforts to address this, the greatest challenge of our time, and to act to prevent the further spread of violent extremism that leads to terrorism. Countering violence with violent means usually breeds further violence rather than bringing about the desired peaceful solution. The better way to counter terrorism is to forge international partnerships and take a comprehensive approach to crafting counter-terrorism measures.

At the same time, my delegation shares the view that sovereign Member States have the primary responsibility for, and an essential role in, drawing up their own national plans to address the challenges posed by violent extremist terrorism and to prevent the spread of violent extremist groups. My delegation therefore wishes to stress the importance of respect for the purposes and principles of the Charter of the United Nations, national sovereignty and national ownership in developing national action plans in line with States' own national efforts, priorities and prevailing particularities of their countries and regions.

The United Nations system can best help Member States by providing technical assistance and support for national capacity-building in the fight against extremist terrorism in the areas and priorities requested by Member States. The United Nations also plays an important role in the collective efforts to address violent extremism in the framework of the United Nations Global Counter-Terrorism Strategy. We therefore welcome the efforts of the Secretary-General in that regard.

Decisions to forge international partnerships for taking action at the national, regional and global levels must be taken with the consent of all the Member States concerned. Accordingly, my delegation welcomes the adoption of resolution 70/254 by consensus this morning.

Mrs. Natividad (Philippines): The Philippines would like to thank the President for convening today's debate, which will allow Member States to exchange views on the Secretary-General's Plan of Action to Prevent Violent Extremism (A/70/674). We also extend our gratitude to the Secretary-General for his hard work in coming up with the Plan of Action. The Philippines fully supports the approaches he has identified, including preventive, all-of-society and United Nations system-wide approaches. In that regard, the Philippines welcomes the adoption of resolution 70/254, on the Secretary-General's Plan of Action, and supports the call regarding the need to address the drivers of violent extremism, which if not addressed will undermine our efforts to promote peace and security, human rights and sustainable development.

Addressing the scourge of violent extremism calls for urgent and comprehensive action by all sectors of the international community. The Philippines has developed a national action plan on countering violent extremism and is taking steps to curb the possible effects of the influence of radicalization and violent extremism, especially through social media. Furthermore, the Philippines intends to undertake research and policy studies on drivers, causes and catalysers of violent extremism with a view to recommending policies, strategic measures, legal actions and legislative proposals to strengthen Government efforts to counter the spread of the scourge.

As part of the whole-of-nation approach, measures will be developed in favour of community development and security and encouraging local initiatives to promote peace and the socioeconomic development of communities most vulnerable to violent extremism. Our Government has already undertaken efforts in the area of inmate rehabilitation and welfare development for those detained or serving prison sentences for crimes related to violent extremism. The Philippine national consultative process on countering violent extremism was initiated in July 2015, with the objective of engaging various stakeholders and eventually empowering strategic sectors of society, such as women and youth, in order to counter the narrative of the Islamic State.

The Philippines continues to develop its capacity to detect and prevent insider threats from home-grown violent extremists. It supports grass-roots-based efforts to help communities understand and protect themselves against extremist and/or terrorist narratives and/or propaganda. Programmes to strengthen deradicalization are being implemented through partnerships with local religious leaders and religious schools, the principal objective of which is to improve their capacity, with the assistance of a number of international partners, to promote moderate or tolerant religious teachings.

Efforts are also being made towards international cooperation. The Philippines has been collaborating with country partners and international organizations to help to build the capacity of the Philippine Government's front-line agencies and offices for an integrated and synchronized approach against terrorism and extremism.

At the regional level, as current Chair of the Asia-Pacific Economic Cooperation (APEC) Counter-Terrorism Working Group, the Philippines was able to promote discussions on the issue of countering violent extremism and foreign terrorist fighters, two important themes that have been identified as priorities for my country. There is now a move for greater collaboration among APEC member States in countering foreign terrorist fighters and promoting exchange of information regarding actions and movements of terrorist and extremist organizations and individuals.

The Philippines believes that the measures we are undertaking can further be complemented by support and assistance from the United Nations and its relevant agencies. In that regard, we find the Secretary-General's recommendations on the role of the United Nations very useful. We stand ready to work with the world body and our regional and international partners in refining and strengthening our national efforts to counter violent extremism, and we look forward to further discussions on how to implement the Secretary-General's Plan of Action.

Mr. Arrocha Olabuenaga (Mexico) (*spoke in Spanish*): My delegation welcomes the convening of this meeting and thanks the Secretary-General for the Plan of Action to Prevent Violent Extremism (A/70/674), in which he presents to Member States his recommendations for addressing the very diverse causes of violent extremism leading to terrorism at the national, regional and global levels.

Mexico recognizes that this new phenomenon for discussion on the international agenda — violent extremism — presents us with important challenges and the need to respond with a preventive and cross-cutting approach. That means that our efforts should principally encompass ensuring better conditions for development and for the rebuilding of the social fabric in order to eradicate the causes of violent extremism. A fundamental part of that task is promoting education that encourages tolerance and respect for human rights, equality between men and women, and youth empowerment — all aspects that are at the centre of the Secretary-General's report. To put it very simply, we must create conditions that can guarantee everyone a prosperous life and a dignified future.

To achieve that, it is also essential to accept certain premises. The first is that violent extremism cannot and should not be associated with any specific religion, nationality, civilization or ethnic group. Secondly, the goal should be to strengthen development, the rule of law and the human rights regime, without which it will be impossible to mitigate many of the root causes of violent extremism. Thirdly, measures to prevent it should be implemented without discrimination or stereotyping. Fourthly, in confronting this phenomenon, all States have an obligation to act strictly in accordance with international law, particularly international human rights law, international humanitarian law and refugee law.

In that way we will avoid measures to combat violent extremism that produce another sort of reaction in society that could stigmatize various sectors or population groups or encourage the very radicalization that they seek to prevent. We emphasize the responsibility that political, religious and community leaders bear for ensuring that the messages they send promote tolerance, respect and a culture of peace, and shun xenophobic and discriminatory propaganda, including in the context of political campaigns and elections.

I take the opportunity of today's debate to sound some notes of caution about potential unintended effects of the Plan of Action, which my delegation believes should be taken into account and discussed as openly as possible. Although the Secretary-General's proposed Plan of Action addresses violent extremism only insofar as it leads to terrorism, the lack of a definition of both concepts that is acceptable to the entire international community, together with a multiplicity of examples that could fall into either category, should compel us to deepen our analysis of the range that the issue might encompas in the future, especially when considering actions or measures designed to deal with any act that could be considered violent extremism.

It is therefore essential to maintain a cross-cutting approach within the United Nations system with regard to actions to prevent violent extremism, as well as to promptly follow up, and reflect on, the potential implications of inserting a notion of violent extremism that has not been agreed on into the institutional and strategic architecture for combating terrorism. This is not just an issue of promoting innovative concepts with differentiated thresholds of gravity and areas of application; it is also about including a preventive Plan of Action in the framework of a chiefly executive strategy. And if, on the contrary, what we are looking for is launching a new strategy against violent extremism, it will then be extremely important that we discuss and carefully define its scope.

My delegation reiterates its commitment to working actively with the rest of the membership in discussing this issue so that we can resolve some of the issues that have been raised in today's debate.

Mr. Estreme (Argentina) (*spoke in Spanish*): The Argentine delegation would like to reiterate its condemnation of terrorism in all its forms and manifestations, as it is one of the most serious threats to international peace and security, as well as to human dignity, peaceful coexistence, the consolidation of democracy and the economic and social development of nations.

Terrorism must be fought in the framework of the rule of law and respect for due process. It is essential that the measures that States take to combat it fully respect international law, especially international human rights law and humanitarian and refugee law. Such measures must also respect the purposes and principles enshrined in the Charter of the United Nations, such as States' sovereignty, territorial integrity and political independence and the principle of non-intervention in internal affairs. We firmly believe that responses to terrorist acts cannot and should not be exclusively military but should be based on a comprehensive approach, as reflected in the United Nations Global Counter-Terrorism Strategy. National, regional and international efforts in the area must be based on a balanced implementation of the Strategy's four pillars.

We should conduct a thorough analysis of the conditions conducive to the spread of terrorism, including prolonged unresolved conflicts, the absence of the rule of law, violations of human rights, discrimination for ethnic, national or religious reasons, political exclusion, economic and social marginalization and a lack of good governance. In that framework, we support resolution 70/254, adopted today, which takes note of the Secretary-General's Plan of Action to Prevent Violent Extremism and encourages Member States to consider the Plan's recommendations and address the issue further in the context of the review of the Global Counter-Terrorism Strategy scheduled for June. That should be done in the light of the preventive nature of the Secretary-General's Plan of Action, which attempts to set out a comprehensive framework for addressing the underlying issues that drive people to join violent extremist groups and with full respect for international law, including international humanitarian law, human rights law and refugee law.

We should be provided as soon as possible with information that is as precise as possible on the potential budgetary impact of the Plan of Action, with a detailed proposal enabling us to assess the kinds of the Organization's resources that would be assigned to it. We should also get more information and clarification on some terminology questions, such as the definition of violent extremism and the scope of the Secretary-General's proposal in particular. In Argentina's view, it is important that references to violent extremism be limited to what might be conducive to terrorism or terrorist acts, since we are dealing with a concept whose broad scope could cover issues that pose no threat to international peace and security.

Finally, we reaffirm the central role of the United Nations in the fight against terrorism as a pillar of the multilateral system and an Organization with universal membership and primary responsibility for the maintenance of international peace and security. We firmly believe that multilateral action through the United Nations and in accordance with its principles will enable us to tackle the threat of terrorism in full respect for international law and international human rights and humanitarian law, and to achieve a world that is safer for everyone.

Mr. Ben Sliman (Tunisia) (*spoke in French*): I would first like to thank the President for organizing this debate on the Secretary-General's Plan of Action to Prevent Violent Extremism.

Tunisia aligns itself with the statement made by the Permanent Representative of Saudi Arabia on behalf of the Organization of Islamic Cooperation (see A/70/PV.84). I would like to make some remarks in my national capacity.

My country is pleased to participate in this important debate, which affords us an opportunity to reaffirm our support for the Secretary-General's Plan of Action and to echo his urgent call to unity and action against violent extremism and its horrors and consequences in view of the global threat it poses to international peace and security.

The recent terrorist attacks in Tunis, Nigeria, Saudi Arabia, Burkina Faso, Turkey, Indonesia, Paris and Lebanon and elsewhere around the world, and the attacks often committed in Syria, Iraq and Libya, with their horrific massacres of civilians, illustrate the extent of the danger of violent extremism, which affects every region in the world, and the urgent need to elaborate our actions. The Secretary-General's Plan of Action calls for a common and coordinated approach by Member States at the local, national, regional and international levels to address the causes of violent extremism in all their complexity.

We believe that the choice of 2016 has symbolic importance, insofar as it coincides with the tenth anniversary of the United Nations Global Counter-Terrorism Strategy. Undoubtedly, this four-pillar Strategy is more relevant than ever. However, it should be noted that in the past greater emphasis was placed on pillar II, particularly on security measures, which are still necessary but insufficient, while pillars I and IV of the Strategy — addressing the conditions conducive to terrorism and ensuring respect for human rights for all and the rule of law within the context of the fight against terrorism — have often been neglected.

The upcoming review of the Global Counter-Terrorism Strategy, in June 2016, constitutes, in our view, a genuine opportunity to take advantage of lessons of the past and to strengthen our actions by including not only security measures — which are still crucial — but also systematic prevention measures that address the causes of violent extremism.It is also undeniable that we must incorporate those actions over the long term and arm ourselves with patience, solidarity, perseverance and tenacity in order to achieve the expected results.

In that context, we are pleased that the General Assembly will work, in accordance with resolution 70/254, adopted today, to engage in substantive discussions on the Secretary-General's Plan of Action with a view to reaching a consensus on how to move forward on such an important priority. In our view, we should seize the opportunity of these discussions to consider together how to mobilize more substantial resources for the implementation of the recommendations contained in the Plan of Action.

Thanks to the commitment of all stakeholders in the dialogue and the active participation of civil society, Tunisia has been able to overcome the difficulties of the transition to democracy, in particular through the adoption of a new Constitution and the holding of free and transparent legislative and presidential elections in 2014. That approach earned it the Nobel Peace Prize for 2015. As important and honourable as that is, that progress cannot conceal the challenges we face, especially that of the fight against terrorism. Tunisia is working at the national level to respond effectively and comprehensively to the terrorism it faces, given the instability of the geopolitical situation in the region. We are determined to combat this phenomenon by the force of law, and also to address the underlying causes of this global threat so as to eradicate it by preventing the radicalization of our youth.

It is in that context that in July 2015 my country adopted a new law that criminalizes acts of support, incitement, training, recruitment, praise, and attempts and complicity in attempts, as well as travel to the conflict zones, in accordance with the relevant Security Council resolutions, in particular resolution 2178 (2014).

We have also recently developed, in close collaboration with Counter-Terrorism Committee Executive Directorate, a holistic and multisectoral national strategy to fight terrorism and violent extremism. The strategy is based on four axes: prevention, protection, monitoring and response. In the area of prevention, the strategy seeks to hinder attempts to directly or indirectly recruit young people, in particular via the Internet, to counter the fundamentalist doctrines of terrorist groups and to thereby reduce the sway of those doctrines on the vulnerable groups or factions of our society. The strategy also calls for the consolidation of pedagogical approaches, the promotion of a culture of dialogue, peace and tolerance, the prevention of radicalization in prisons, the development of marginalized areas, and the rejection of any justifications for terrorist acts. It also suggests that studies on the role of women in the fight against terrorism be encouraged.

Promoting good governance, the rule of law and the universal values of human rights is also among the priorities of the strategy. We are convinced that the prevention of violent extremism must be combined with the promotion of human rights, and of the importance of protecting our achievements in that area. We are also determined to pursue the objectives of the strategy not only with the involvement of civil society, but also with that of key players in the fields of education, religious affairs and the Internet, because we believe the fight against terrorism is incumbent upon all of us.

I wish to conclude by underscoring my country's commitment to making an active contribution to the efforts of the Secretary-General to establish a new global partnership to prevent violent extremism, a partnership conveys our solidarity and unity in the defence of our shared values of peace, justice and human dignity, bearing in mind the crucial role of the United Nations and conforming to the Charter of the United Nations and our international obligations.

Mrs. Diagne (Senegal) (*spoke in French*): At the outset, I would like express my sincere gratitude to the President of the General Assembly, Mr. Mogens Lykketoft, for organizing this debate, which affords Member States an opportunity to express their views on the Secretary-General's Plan of Action to Prevent Violent Extremism.

My delegation endorses the statement made by the representative of Saudi Arabia on behalf of the Organization of Islamic Cooperation (see A/70/PV.84). I would like to make several remarks in my national capacity.

The spread of international terrorism and violent extremism has reached unprecedented proportions and remains a source of major concern for the international community. No country, no region of the world, is immune from this threat. Even in areas that are deemed stable and/or developed, suspicion, prejudice and violent nationalism emrge, providing conditions that are favourable to the spread of violent extremism.

The countries of our subregion of West Africa and the Sahel suffer assaults and frequent threats from terrorist and jihadist groups such as Boko Haram, Al-Qaida in the Islamic Maghreb, and the Islamic State in Iraq and the Levant, which continue to spread terror within communities through attacks, abductions and summary executions of a rare violence. The level of violence and cruelty of recent attacks across the world, with hundreds of innocent victims, reminds us of the urgent need to respond in a collective and coordinated manner to this pernicious threat to international peace and security.

My delegation welcomes the efforts undertaken by the Secretary General to that end and expressesits support for the Plan of Action that has been submitted for our consideration. That Plan places particular emphasis on the disastrous consequences of violent extremism for international peace and security, sustainable development, respect for human rights, the rule of law and on humanitarian work in conflict zones.

To be efficient, any action taken to combat terrorism and violent extremism must first tackle both structural and economic elements that, while being at their source, also promote their spread. Among them, I mention marginalization, discrimination, poor governance, the lack of socioeconomic prospects, the frequent misinterpretation and manipulation of religion and the abusive use of religious vocabulary.

Given a situation in which the international community seems to be having a difficult time finding appropriate approaches, it is absolutely necessary that it adopt a coercive, inclusive, united and long-term approach, while strengthening cooperation at the regional, subregional and international levels. It is important that Member States be in a position to adopt, in exercise of their full sovereignty, national plans of action based on local realities and better tailored to their socioeconomic and security contexts. The settlement and prevention of conflicts, dialogue, the involvement of the population through the mobilization of youth, the empowerment of women, education, the enhancement of skills and facilitating access to employment are all essential components of the prevention of violent extremism. Such actions can prevent the radicalization of young people and their recruitment as foreign terrorist fighters by extremist organizations.

The biennial review of the United Nations Global Counter-Terrorism Strategy, planned for this coming

June, will provide an excellent opportunity to carry out an in-depth consideration of the Plan of Action with a view to arriving at the necessary consensus for its effective and universal implementation. To that end, the conference to be held in Geneva on 7 and 8 April will be another opportunity to continue our discussions.

In its efforts to implement measures aimed at eliminating international terrorism and violent extremism, Senegal has adopted an approach based on prevention, cooperation and rapid response. Similarly, my country is participating actively in cooperation with regard to international criminal justice against terrorism, monitoring land and sea borders and airports, mutual legal assistance, and money laundering and terrorist financing. That is in addition to the two laws passed in 2007 that established a stronger regime against perpetrators of terrorist acts.

National efforts to combat terrorism and violent extremism deserve support. In that regard, the United Nations should continue to provide technical assistance to States requesting it, while ensuring better coordination of the activities of its entities, offices and programmes involved in the cause.

The fight against terrorism and the obscurantism underpinning it requires the promotion of tolerance and acceptance, which are possible only through dialogue among peoples, religions and cultures. Faced with different types of extremism on all sides, therefore, it would be fitting to develop an appropriate ideological response that could bring, especially to the youth targeted by recruiters, the true message of our religions, which is none other than the love of one's neighbour, the love of peace, and harmony among individuals and peoples, whatever their personal beliefs or religious affiliation.

Senegal, a secular and multiconfessional State, has made the culture of tolerance and peace and interreligious dialogue one of the founding pillars of its existence. That is why it is often referred to as a model in terms of the peaceful coexistence among the communities that comprise it. We are equally proud to be the melting pot of peaceful Islam, where different branches of that religion embody a philosophy capable of providing a solid bulwark against violent extremism and the rejection of the other.

My delegation is pleased that the General Assembly was able, through the adoption of resolution 70/254, to speak with one voice and accordingly send a strong and clear message regarding our will to carry out concrete and coordinated actions to fight violent extremism. Senegal remains committed to that path and will participate actively and constructively in the ongoing process.

The meeting rose at 6.15 p.m.

United Nations A/70/PV.86

General Assembly
Seventieth session

Official Records

86th plenary meeting
Tuesday, 16 February 2016, 3 p.m.
New York

President: Mr. Lykketoft .... (Denmark)

In the absence of the President, Mr. Cardi (Italy), Vice-President, took the Chair.

The meeting was called to order at 3.15 p.m.

Agenda items 16 and 117 (*continued*)

Culture of peace

The United Nations Global Counter-Terrorism Strategy

Report of the Secretary-General (A/70/674)

The Acting President: We will now continue to hear statements on the report of the Secretary-General (A/70/674).

Mr. Khoshroo (Islamic Republic of Iran): I thank the President for organizing this formal debate on the Plan of Action to Prevent Violent Extremism presented by the Secretary-General (A/70/674).

It is our understanding — as has also been stated earlier in the two previous meetings (A/70/PV.84 and A/70/PV.85) — that the Plan of Action is a significant initiative that both raises awareness and calls for coordination among and action by Member States against violent extremism, which is currently the most pressing threat against the security, stability, socioeconomic achievements and social fabric of many countries around the world.

We reiterate our support for many of the ideas, elements and proposed remedies contained in the document. As the main sponsor of resolutions 70/109, "A world against violence and violent extremism", and 56/6, "Global Agenda for Dialogue among Civilizations", we see much added value in the proposed Plan of Action, should it initiate an open and inclusive dialogue aimed at effectively dealing with that global threat. Such a process would signal the resolve of the international community to prevent and combat the heinous phenomenon of violent extremism. We also reiterate our firm position that violent extremism, in all its forms and manifestations, cannot and should not be associated with any religion, nationality, civilization or ethnic group, as we recognize the commitment of all religions to peace.

We would like to take this opportunity to highlight a few issues in the Plan of Action that we think require further attention and reflection on the part of Member States.

From a methodological point of view, while parts of the Plan of Action contain a deep and even academic approach, other parts merely present a reflection on certain current events and specific cases that may become irrelevant in the near future. Consistency would have brought more credibility to the text. If the Plan of Action focuses on violent extremism conducive to terrorism, one should avoid discussing unrelated issues that do not fit into the scope of the text. Each agenda needs to be considered within its own appropriate context. For instance, some of the groups mentioned in paragraph 19 are hardly relevant to the contents of the Plan of Action.

At the same time, the text is silent on a number of significant causes that have enraged millions of

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people but have been used by terrorists as recruiting tools. Indeed, some of them are the main root causes of violent extremism, and it is unfortunate that the Plan of Action has decided to overlook such drivers. Foreign occupation, which is per se a manifestation of violent extremism, has been used to incite violence out of desperation and hopelessness. The destabilization of legitimate Governments by mobilizing, arming and funding armed groups is another driver that can create breeding grounds and lead to the rise of violent extremism. Meanwhile, foreign and military interventions and policies of regime change have significantly fed violent extremism globally. All these factors deserve to be addressed and highlighted in the report.

It is true that the Internet and modern social media have been exploited by extremists to advance their vicious objectives. However, the Plan of Action once again fails to recognize the unconstructive and even destructive role that the mainstream media and news outlets in some countries have played in promoting sectarianism, intolerance, xenophobic attitudes and racism. Many young people, mainly from disenfranchised minority communities, are being pushed towards radicalization because of fallacious policies by some major media outlets.

In conclusion, we once again welcome the initiative of the Secretary-General while reiterating our position that for Member States to own the process and its outcome, they should have ample and adequate opportunity to express themselves on this critical subject.

Mr. Charles (Trinidad and Tobago): Trinidad and Tobago wishes to express its gratitude to the President for convening this important debate on violent extremism. We also take this opportunity to express our gratitude to the Secretary-General for his comprehensive report on the proposed Plan of Action to Prevent Violent Extremism (A/70/674).

As we approach the 10-year review of the United Nations Global Counter-Terrorism Strategy in June, today's deliberations, in our view, will have to facilitate the deepening of our commitment to building an effective global framework for collective security that will be faithful to the aspirations of international peace, as envisioned in the Charter of the United Nations.

The radicalization of otherwise law-abiding, responsible individuals in peaceful communities and societies has resulted in such persons committing acts of violent extremism through a deep sense of collective frustration, deprivation and disillusionment. What we face as an international community built on the cherished values of freedom, individual choice, mutual respect and understanding, even while appreciating and indeed valuing our rich diversity, is a virtual battle for the hearts and minds of our citizens, particularly our young people, who seem particularly susceptible to external radical influences.

As a result, an integral feature of the international community's strategy in countering violent extremism must be to reduce the social, economic, political and psychological appeal of terrorism by addressing, among other things, the socioeconomic challenges and pressures attendant in vulnerable societies. In many instances they provide a fertile ground for exploitation by terrorist groups in order to breed hatred, intolerance and violence, all in the name of serving a higher and just cause.

Let us be clear that violent extremism and terrorism can exist anywhere and everywhere. Thus they should not be regarded as being limited to any particular belief system or religion. The wide geographic, ethnic and cultural spectrum of persons who have become associated with terrorist groups can confirm that radicalism has cross-cultural resonance. In that context, Trinidad and Tobago strongly supports the Secretary-General's Plan of Action on Violent Extremism because, we believe, it would further bolster international counter-terrorism efforts by providing a pragmatic, strategic framework that addresses the negative social, economic and psychological elements that converge under conditions of poverty and other conditions of human deprivation.

The correlation between violent extremism and development should be neither overlooked nor dismissed. The 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development (resolution 70/1) recognizes that there can be no peace without sustainable development. Trinidad and Tobago commends the Secretary-General for his visionary approach centred on fighting violent extremism by promoting a culture of peace, eradicating poverty, reducing inequalities and marginalization and building just and inclusive societies.

It is imperative that marginalized groups, in particular women and young people, be allowed to freely exercise their rights to education, decent work, freedom of religion and respect for their human rights in general. Women are disproportionately affected by violent conflict, and we believe that the empowerment of women and gender equality are critical to countering violent extremism. Our advocacy at the United Nations for the empowerment of women as leaders in developing responses to armed conflict is a matter of record.

At the same time, we are also deeply concerned about the global trend revealing that a significant number of young people are falling victim to recruitment by violent extremist groups through modern communications technology. In Trinidad and Tobago we have engaged in consultations and partnerships with young people and youth-oriented stakeholders in order to develop policies and implement programmes and services aimed at advancing youth empowerment and development, so that our younger citizens feel a greater sense of belonging and self-worth in doing positive things to build stronger and more cohesive communities.

Small States such as Trinidad and Tobago have limited capacities and resources in their efforts to fight violent extremism. We therefore view the Secretary-General's Plan of Action as an important opportunity for the international community to share knowledge and information on matters related to violent extremism, as well as to deepen cooperation in order to build an effective global shield against it.

Trinidad and Tobago stands ready to use its own resources as a model for other countries implementing aspects of the Plan of Action, which calls on Member States to enhance cross-cultural understanding as a means to counter violent extremism and promote social inclusion and cohesion. Just last week, we celebrated our world-famous Carnival, which showcases the popular splendour of our cultural diversity through a vibrant array of the music, artistry, masquerade, theatre and other expressions of cultural ingenuity for which Trinidad and Tobago is world-renowned. It has been heralded as an excellent example of social cohesion and peaceful coexistence between peoples of different creeds, races and belief systems in a unity of purpose and diversity.

International terrorism and violent extremism have no respect for territorial borders, or for race, age, gender and social class. As States Members of the United Nations we must continue to work assiduously in concert to rid the international community of violent extremism, acts of terrorism and other negative phenomena. For those reasons, Trinidad and Tobago reaffirms its unequivocal commitment to the United Nations Global Counter-Terrorism Strategy and supports the Secretary-General's Plan of Action to Prevent Violent Extremism.

Mr. Hahn Choonghee (Republic of Korea): At the outset, I would like to thank the President for his initiative in convening today's important and timely meeting.

The Republic of Korea welcomes and supports resolution 70/254, which the General Assembly adopted on Friday. That timely resolution will help us carry forward the positive, strong momentum generated by the Secretary-General's Plan of Action to Prevent Violent Extremism (A/70/674). Its adoption by consensus by the Assembly — the United Nations body that can speak with a truly global voice — will send a powerful message that the international community is united in its cause and in its efforts to address the grave challenge of violent extremism.

The Republic of Korea would once again like to express its full support for the Plan of Action, and we appreciate the leadership of Secretary-General Ban Ki-moon in taking forward this important subject in the United Nations. We believe that the Plan of Action provides crucial momentum and guidelines to help Member States develop their own national plans of action based on consideration of their domestic situations.

Preventing violent extremism is one of the most pressing security challenges we face today. Yet the difficult reality is that there can be no single, one-size-fits-all solution to the problem. The motives behind radicalization vary with societies, and diverse factors are involved, ranging from extremist ideologies to socioeconomic factors and personal grievances. Preventing violent extremism will therefore require an equally diverse and multidimensional approach. In that regard, the Republic of Korea supports the comprehensive approach stressed in the Plan of Action, encompassing not only security-based counter-terrorism efforts but also various measures to address the deep underlying drivers of violent extremism. We also support an interdisciplinary, all-of-society and all-of-Government approach that involves not only Governments but also the private sector and civil society in effectively addressing violent extremism.

On a final note, I would like to emphasize the importance of youth and education in preventing violent extremism, which is also stressed in the Plan of Action. It is well known that most of the 30,000 foreign terrorist fighters who have joined extremist groups from all over the world are young people, some of them barely 15 years old. To prevent such young people from falling prey to extremist ideologies and propaganda, it is crucial to teach them from a very young age the values of peace, human dignity, tolerance and mutual respect and understanding, as emphasized in the concept of global citizenship education. Through such education for global citizenship, we should be able to convince our younger generation that it is our free and diverse societies — not the hatred, division and violence preached by extremists — that offer the right path for humankind. The Republic of Korea will continue to make every effort to promote global citizenship as an approach for finding a fundamental solution to violent extremism as well as an overarching goal of the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development (resolution 70/1).

Mr. Meza-Cuadra (Peru) (*spoke in Spanish*): I wish to express the Peruvian delegation's appreciation for the Secretary-General's timely and important initiative in developing a Plan of Action to Prevent Violent Extremism (A/70/674). It is particularly relevant in the current context, in which traditional counter-terrorism measures have not been sufficient to prevent its spread. Today we have an opportunity to hold a comprehensive discussion on how best to use our comparative advantages in order to effectively prevent violent extremism.

Violent extremism is a complex phenomenon, and the Plan of Action focuses in particular on violent extremism that leads to terrorism. Although we believe, as the Plan of Action states, that definition of the terms "violent extremism" and "terrorism" is the prerogative of States, the Plan of Action could help to reveal some distinctive elements of both concepts that might be confused. A clear definition would contribute to better implementation of the Plan of Action at national level.

We welcome the emphasis that the Plan places on the need to broaden our responses, act proactively and address the underlying structural and economic factors that fuel violent extremism. In sum, prevention should be a central part of our comprehensive approach, as that will help diminish the conditions that can lead people, especially young people, to join violent extremist groups. Specifically, we believe that the recommendation aimed at reducing inequalities and strengthening the social fabric is particularly relevant. It deals not only with avoiding radicalizing individuals, but also with including them in society. In that context, we must make national development policies consistent with 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development (resolution 70/1), including Sustainable Development Goals 1 and 16.

As Peru has suffered the scourge of terrorism, we welcome with particular interest the recommendation on developing national plans to prevent violent extremism. We have therefore begun a multisectoral process with that goal in mind, including establishing a financial intelligence unit, given the priority importance Peru attaches to combatting terrorist financing. We also believe that it is essential that this initiative be reflected at the regional level, where the contexts, capacities and challenges are similar among countries. In the fight against terrorism our region can count on, for example, the Inter-American Committee against Terrorism of the Organization of American States, which provides technical assistance and cooperation to member States.

Another aspect of the Plan that we want to highlight is the development and strengthening of communication strategies and the use of social networks by Governments. We must counter the messages of hate that could lead to the radicalization of young people, who are the main victims of recruitment by violent extremists groups.

Finally, I would like to take this opportunity to announce that today Peru has deposited its instrument of ratification of the Arms Trade Treaty. Some of the provisions of that Treaty, as we know, are particularly important in the fight against terrorism. I reaffirm my Government's strongest condemnation of terrorism in all its forms and manifestations, including violent extremism, which leads to terrorism. We reiterate the need to always act in accordance with international law and with full respect for human rights when countering any group that terrorizes civilian populations as it spreads its messages of hatred, death and intolerance. Peru therefore expresses its support for resolution 70/254, submitted by the President of the General Assembly, which welcomes the Plan of Action and seeks to ensure that the Plan is properly complemented by the upcoming biennial review of the United Nations Global Counter-Terrorism Strategy.

Mr. Holovka (Serbia): Serbia aligns itself with the statement delivered by the observer of the European

Union (see A/70/PV.84). I would like, however, to make a number of remarks from my national perspective.

Over a number of years, terrorism has posed one of the greatest challenges to the present-day world. It has become a serious threat to security at the global level. Unfortunately, we have been witness to the emergence of new phenomena, including terrorist organizations such as the Islamic State in Iraq and the Levant, the activities of which are very different from those in the past, as well as to the increasing importance of the issue of violent extremism and radicalization, which necessitates a vigorous response. In the past several months, numerous terrorist attacks with tragic consequences have been committed in various parts of the world, so that no region is safe from being targeted any more.

Serbia takes the threat of terrorism, which the entire region of the Western Balkans is faced with, very seriously. I wish to recall the numerous challenges that the unprecedented wave of migrants has brought to Europe, including Serbia and other countries in the region. Another concern for Serbia has been the phenomenon of foreign terrorist fighters, which in our region is a problem to be addressed through active cooperation. Serbia has taken a number of measures in that area, adopting relevant laws and taking operational actions independently and in cooperation with its partners. Serbia attaches priority importance to the fight against terrorism and violent extremism and has realized wide international and regional cooperation, including with the United Nations, which plays the central role in the joint international undertaking. The United Nations Global Counter-Terrorism Strategy is the cornerstone of those efforts.

On 15 January, the Secretary-General presented to the General Assembly the Plan of Action to Prevent Violent Extremism (A/70/674). Following subsequent work and further elaboration, the Plan will provide additional assistance and support for the efforts to combat terrorism and prevent violent extremism. My country is well aware that proactive measures aimed at preventing violent extremism are very important for eliminating the risk of terrorism, and its competent institutions and agencies are already working on the adoption of such measures. In that regard, the prevention of violent extremism and radicalization that lead to terrorism is accorded special attention in devising a national strategy and other strategic documents to counter terrorism.

It is only through perseverant, long-term work on prevention and inclusion and a commitment to tolerance and development, as well as the prevention of the emergence and spread of the ideas of violent extremism, that we can reach our ultimate goal of eliminating international terrorism. In that context, the rule of law, good governance and respect of human rights provide an appropriate environment that we should strive to promote.

During its 2015 chairmanship of the Organization for Security and Cooperation in Europe (OSCE), Serbia initiated, in cooperation with the OSCE secretariat, a campaign called OSCE United in Countering Violent Extremism. At the Ministerial Council meeting in Belgrade in December, the participating States adopted the Declaration on Preventing and Countering Violent Extremism and Radicalization that Lead to Terrorism and the Declaration on Reinforcing OSCE Efforts to Counter Terrorism in the Wake of Recent Terrorist Attacks.

Serbia considers the work on preventing violent extremism of paramount importance in the comprehensive fight against terrorism and welcomes the efforts of the Secretary-General and the continuation of the work within the United Nations on the Plan of Action to Prevent Violent Extremism. Addressing the problem of violent extremism and its prevention takes centre stage in the efforts to fight the scourge of the present-day world. Serbia attaches great importance to active international cooperation, with the United Nations at its core. It supports the work on the Plan of Action and other activities to take place in this important field, including those at the Global Counter-Terrorism Strategy review in June.

Mr. Radomski (Poland): Poland aligns itself with the statement delivered by the observer of the European Union (see A/PV.84). I would like to underline a few elements that are important from our national perspective.

Poland welcomes the initiative of the Plan of Action to Prevent Violent Extremism (A/70/674) presented by the Secretary-General. We are deeply convinced that this is a timely move, as the Plan of Action tackles one of the most pressing global challenges. In the course of future deliberations on the proposed Plan, we need to ensure coherence and coordination with ongoing initiatives in the field of countering violent extremism that are conducted by various organizations and entities, as well as within the United Nations system. Synergy in that regard is required not only in order to achieve our goals, but also to use our resources efficiently.

It is important to stress — as rightly reflected in resolution 70/254, which the General Assembly adopted by consensus on Friday — that radicalism and violent extremism should not be associated with any religion, nationality, civilization or ethnic group. This scourge occurs in many different countries, among many different societies. Therefore, we need different instruments, adjusted to local conditions and specific demands, to counter it.

Violent extremism is a first step towards terrorism — a plague of our times — and prevention is the most efficient way to eradicate this cancer. The General Assembly's unanimous support for the Secretary-General's initiative confirms our determination to respond to one of the most serious threats the world is facing today.

Ms. Ziade (Lebanon): I wish to thank President Mogens Lykketoft for convening this debate, which provides us with the opportunity to share our perspectives on the Secretary-General's Plan of Action to Prevent Violent Extremism (A/70/674).

Lebanon aligns itself with the statement delivered by the representative of Saudi Arabia on behalf of the Organization of Islamic Cooperation (see A/70/PV.84).

In the face of violent extremism, we must all stand united. We commend the Secretary-General for his commitment to preventing violent extremism through the elaboration of a comprehensive Plan of Action. The unanimous adoption of resolution 70/254 on Friday, 12 February on such initiative is most opportune and sends a positive and strong signal from the international community. My delegation would like to stress the following.

Addressing the root causes, drivers, political grievances — whatever we want to call them — of violent extremism is crucial. Foreign occupation, marginalization, flashpoints of tension, human rights violations, double standards in the application of international law, and impunity tend to create fertile ground for violent extremism. Addressing those root causes will contribute to uprooting violent extremism.

We are also of the view that the emphasis placed on youth is fundamental, as they should be the main recipients of the Plan, particularly the youth in the Arab world, where they represent one third of the overall population. Education that disseminates values of openness and dialogue and encourages critical thinking is pivotal in building up resilience for our future generations. It is also important to continue developing modern and attractive social organizations for youth to prevent the rise of extremist ideologies.

In the same vein, women's empowerment is key, as they undeniably contribute to stable and peaceful societies. In that regard, Lebanon reiterates its strong support for all relevant resolutions of the United Nations, including the landmark Security Council resolution 1325 (2000) and subsequent resolutions, as well as Goal 5 of the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development (resolution 70/1). Additionally, the inclusive approach that consists of developing partnerships at all levels — from the United Nations to the private sector, civil society and grassroots organizations — is cardinal to help and assist States in their preventative efforts.

While we are aware that violent extremism is broad and must not be limited to or conflated with terrorism, it is often conducive to it. If no region or country is spared by terrorism, some regions and countries happen to be more affected than others. Unfortunately, terrorism has taken a heavy toll on my country. Lebanon, consistent with its well-known tradition, articulated in the 2014 Government policy declaration, remains at the forefront of the battle against terrorism and is committed to acting resolutely to put an end to it.

Therefore, Lebanon looks forward to discussing the Plan of Action in the context of the upcoming review of the United Nations Global Counter-Terrorism Strategy, which in June of this year will mark its tenth anniversary. Recommendations contained in the Plan can definitely strengthen pillars I and IV of the Strategy, dealing, respectively, with the conditions conducive to the spread of terrorism, and respect for human rights while countering terrorism.

In conclusion, as we are still examining the substance of the Plan, my country stands ready to constructively consider its recommendations in all future relevant processes.

Ms. Pedrós Carretero (Spain) (*spoke in Spanish*): Spain aligns itself with the statement delivered by the observer of the European Union (see A/70/PV.84).

My delegation welcomes the Secretary-General's Plan of Action to Prevent Violent Extremism (A/70/674), which establishes a global framework to prevent violent extremism. This initiative underscores the need for our actions to always be rooted in respect for human rights and the rule of law, and it responds to the will clearly expressed by Member States to unite forces against violent extremism. The Plan of Action and initiatives at the national and regional levels should be mutually nourishing and reinforcing. All Member States should strengthen their legal framework against terrorism and violent extremism. In that context, it is essential to create national coordination bodies to maximize our efficiency in fighting violent radicalization that leads to terrorism.

In conflict prevention, the international community already has at its disposal initiatives that promote plurality and cultural and religious dialogue, such as the United Nations Alliance of Civilizations and the King Abdullah Bin Abdulaziz International Centre for Interreligious and Intercultural Dialogue, which is based in Vienna. At the regional level too there are valuable initiatives. Among them, I can mention a couple in which Spain participates: the Anna Lindh Foundation and the Mediation in the Mediterranean Initiative, spearheaded by Spain and Morocco. Those institutions play an important role in the prevention of violent extremism that should be recognized. Their example can serve as a model for new initiatives that deepen and strengthen dialogue.

Good governance is an essential tool for the prevention of violent extremism. In developing the Plan of Action, all States should be invited to draw up laws and practices to ensure the political participation of all minorities, a key element for social cohesion. In efforts to integrate communities, the role of local bodies must be strengthened, because that is the level at which one can begin to build citizen participation. That is why the development of the Plan of Action must reaffirm the need to give communities a direct dialogue at the local level. We must also ensure full social awareness of incitement to discrimination and hate crimes by training the social actors and other relevant sectors, including the administration of justice.

For collaboration with communities, it is important that States decide to establish models for managing social diversity, including religious diversity. Once again, the local level can be an essential preventive element. It is important to establish mechanisms for mediation and coordination — mechanisms that benefit communities and enable them to connect with all of society and with the State. Furthermore, youth should be a central objective in any strategy to prevent radicalism and violent extremism. Marginalization and the lack of opportunity are among the factors leading to the rise of radical behaviour. States should promote policies designed to guarantee and improve education and promote the inclusion of young people in society and in the labour market.

Equally decisive in this context is the fundamental role of women in society and in family relationships. States should reaffirm their commitment to promote policies that ensure gender equality. During the Spanish presidency of the Security Council in October 2015, resolution 2242 (2015), which highlights the role of women in peace and security issues, was adopted. Spain leads the informal group established by this resolution to facilitate a systematic approach that makes possible greater oversight and coordination of the activities required for its implementation.

The development of the Plan of Action and the upcoming review conference for the United Nations Global Counter-Terrorism Strategy, to be held in June, should establish links with the agencies, committees and working groups dedicated specifically to women's rights, such as UN Women, the Committee on the Elimination of All Forms of Discrimination against Women, and the Working Group on the issue of discrimination against women in law and in practice.

Values education from an early age plays a crucial role in preventing violent extremism. Educational institutions should promote attitudes that lead to the rejection of extremist violence, such as training in human rights and respect for diversity. In that connection, the use of victim testimony in education could also be a valuable tool for preventing the violent radicalization of young people.

We believe that States must legislate to prevent the spread of extremist ideas and the recruitment of terrorist fighters through new communications media such as the Internet and social networks, while being careful to maintain the utmost respect for freedom of the press and of opinion. An important part of the response is to develop a compelling counter-narrative through those same networks.

The victims of terrorism are a moral reference point to be employed in the fight against violent radicalization.

The value of their testimonies on the Internet and social networks is key in our communication strategies. Such testimonies can help to develop a narrative that can enhance the human values of pluralism, coexistence and tolerance and dilute terrorist propaganda. As a firm believer in that idea, Spain brought the voice of the victims of terrorism to the Security Council for the first time, during its presidency in October, to reaffirm the importance of protecting the rights of victims and to highlight the crucial role they can play in preventing radicalization and terrorism.

Let me conclude with a word on foreign terrorist fighters, one of the greatest dangers we face in the fight against radicalization and violent extremism. If we can stop the flow of foreign terrorist fighters, we will have won an important battle. That is why the Madrid guiding principles on stemming the flow of foreign terrorist fighters, which were agreed by the Security Council Counter-Terrorism Committee during its special meeting held in Madrid on 28 July 2015, are particularly relevant.

Mr. Zinsou (Benin) (*spoke in French*): First and foremost, I thank the President for having convened today's meeting, which is being held at a most opportune time.

Benin endorses the statement made by the representative of Saudi Arabia on behalf of the Organization of Islamic Cooperation (see A/70/PV.84), of which it is a member, and would like to make some additional comments in its national capacity.

Benin welcomes the adoption by consensus of resolution 70/254, on the Secretary-General's Plan of Action to Prevent Violent Extremism (A/70/674). We commend the leadership shown by the Secretary-General in presenting this ambitious, coherent Plan of Action, based on a comprehensive approach to preventing violent extremism. The Government of Benin affirms its full support for the principal axes in the Plan of Action, which has the advantage of providing a thorough analysis and a shared vision of today's challenges and strong, operational recommendations to guide action at the national, regional and international levels.

Benin believes that violent extremism and terrorism are above all political actions, and that action to prevent and combat them must be taken in a political framework. It is clear that security measures alone, although essential, will never be sufficient to address the serious threat posed by violent extremism. Together we must continue to examine in depth the causes and factors that regrettably lead many young people to be seduced by radical ideologies and abused by criminal and terrorist groups that sow the seeds of hatred in hearts and spread poisoned speech via the Internet and social networks.

It is important to stress the need to avoid falling into the trap of prejudice and stereotypes that systematically link violent extremism and terrorism to poverty, youth or, worse, to communities or religions, as some regrettably do. Nonetheless, leaders at all levels must be aware of the thresholds of frustration and tolerance as they manage the people and situations for which they are responsible. From that perspective, it is important to consistently monitor situations that tend to push people towards the radicalization that is fertile ground for spreading the ideology of violent extremism. This is a guiding principle of national governance that African regional bodies are attempting to promote through a remarkable normative effort and the ongoing monitoring of national performances measured against a baseline of consensus standards. The African Peer Review Mechanism and multiple protocols that support the African Peace and Security Architecture of the African Union are two examples.

Indeed, there is no automatic establishment of causality among these phenomena, but we urgently need to step up our efforts to fight the exploitation of situations of distress and marginalization. To achieve that, it is essential to mobilize all sectors of society, including young people, women, families, civil society, educational institutions, religious leaders and traditional leaders, for the cause of public safety. No one should be left behind; we must reach out to everyone. It is also essential to ensure respect for human rights and public freedoms, as well as for the strengthening of education and the awareness of young people.

The Government of my country has not only endorsed the African Peer Review Mechanism but, because it is eager to participate more actively in the efforts of the international community in the field of conflict prevention and the sustainable resolution of conflicts spreading in Africa, it also opted to start an African initiative for education on peace and development through interreligious and intercultural dialogue. It was officially launched at the international symposium held in Cotonou on 28 May 2015. This initiative primarily aims to counter the resurgence of violent extremism in Africa by attacking the root causes of that evil, as recommended by the Preamble to the Charter of UNESCO, with peace education as its anchor. Benin thanks the Japanese Government for its support in implementing this initiative. We must continue to support efforts by the leaders of religious faiths everywhere to work together for peace and sustainable development.

Benin particularly welcomes the link that the Plan of Action to Prevent Violent Extremism establishes with the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development (resolution 70/1), with a clear identification of Sustainable Development Goals that will have a positive effect on the prevention of violent extremism. In that respect, aware that the prevention of violent extremism also requires the promotion of sustainable growth whose results benefit the entire society, the Government of Benin has recently taken important measures to assist the most vulnerable in the framework of its policy of leaving no Beninese behind.

Thus, at the conclusion of a Council of Ministers meeting held on 22 January, the following targeted measures were announced, consisting of budgetary allocations for the current year: 1.5 billion CFA francs to assist persons with disabilities, 50 billion CFA francs in microcredit for women, 1 billion CFA francs to combat the seasonal relocation of livestock, and 20 billion CFA francs to assist scooter-taxi drivers in switching to the agricultural sector and making tractors available to them. To reduce poverty and feelings of frustration among young people, in 2016 the Government will work to provide 130,000 jobs for youth, particularly in agriculture, education and the digital economy to foster network expansion in the country.

The Secretary-General's report underscores that measures taken at the local, national and regional levels have the greatest impact with regard to preventing violent extremism. Benin will take the appropriate measures to have a national plan of action to prevent violent extremism by not only drawing on the directives of the United Nations Plan of Action and the principles of the United Nations Global Counter-Terrorism Strategy, but also and especially by taking into consideration local specifics and regional dynamics.

Benin recalls that without stronger international cooperation, sustained technical support to Member States and adequate funding for the implementation of the new Plan of Action to Prevent Violent Extremism, it will be difficult for us to achieve our shared objectives. Benin will contribute actively to the review of the Global Counter-Terrorism Strategy in June and to the meeting in April on the new Plan of Action, which is being organized by the Swiss Government and the United Nations.

Mr. Barros Melet (Chile) (*spoke in Spanish*): In the framework of the celebration of the tenth anniversary of the unanimous adoption of the United Nations Global Counter-Terrorism Strategy (resolution 60/288), Chile once again welcomes and commends the timely initiative of the Secretary-General in the preparation and design of the Plan of Action to Prevent Violent Extremism (A/70/674) — extremism that leads to terrorist acts — which contains elements and recommendations in extremely useful priority areas for incorporation in the global, regional and national strategies to combat this phenomenon.

For my country, the Plan of Action is an appropriate and necessary guide, given the current context in which violent extremism manifests itself as a genuine threat to international peace and security and compels us to find approaches that encompass not only permanent and crucial security measures against terrorism, but also systemic preventive measures to address the causes of violent extremism. In that regard, Chile trusts that the creation of open, equitable, inclusive and pluralistic societies based on full respect for human rights and economic opportunities for all will be the most concrete alternative to violent extremism.

Mr. Zinsou (Benin), Vice-President, took the Chair.

However, we note that at the international level, particularly in the context of the United Nations, we are indebted to a convention that collects the definitions of terrorism and violent extremism that leades to it. Aware of this special momentum and convinced that these collective efforts must be coherent — without dodging core aspects — in order to effectively combat such phenomena, we reiterate our interest in starting negotiations in this forum with a view to finally having an international legal instrument that serves as a regulatory framework on this important issue. This should happen simultaneously with progress at the local and regional levels, especially in legislative and judiciary areas.

Finally, Chile reiterates that actions arising from the Secretary-General's report should be in harmony with the Sustainable Development Goals that will shape our next 15 years of action and should explicitely include new goals and targets connected to preventing violence and the promotion of peaceful and inclusive societies. Based on that commitment, we endorse resolution 70/254, proposed by Assembly President Lykketoft and unanimously adopted at the start of this debate.

Mr. Cardi (Italy): Italy aligns itself with the statement delivered by the observer of the European Union on Friday (see A/70/PV.84) and wishes to add the following remarks in its national capacity.

The evolving terrorist threat requires a comprehensive approach by the international community. Clearly, the military solution is not sufficient. We also need to increase our efforts on the preventive side and extend our work beyond the Governments, engaging with local communities, civil society and the private sector to prevent the spread of violent extremist ideology. Young people are particularly important, since they are an easy target of propaganda.

At the same time, we need closer cooperation between Member States and relevant United Nations bodies. In that context, we believe the adoption of resolution 70/254 on Friday, on the Plan of Action to Prevent Violent Extremism — which we fully support — represents a fundamental step towards a comprehensive, preventive response, including throughout the United Nations system.

We commend the Secretary-General for pioneering such timely work in the uncharted waters of violent extremism conducive to terrorism. While the main responsibility in this area lies with Member States, the Secretary-General's initiative confirms that the United Nations will be committed to working with us at all levels. The review of the United Nations Global Counter-Terrorism Strategy will provide much-needed analysis and indicate further steps and initiatives to be implemented.

On 29 July 2015, Italy convened an international debate in Rome on violent extremism. Its outcomes can make a useful contribution to the efforts of all relevant actors. A key element of our policies and everyday action is attention to intercultural dialogue and education, in particular of young people, as well as the empowerment of women. In our view, strengthening a culture of dialogue and tolerance and building constructive relations with all communities at the national level must go hand in hand with international cooperation among States, United Nations bodies and civil society organizations. We believe that is also the approach we should take to the humanitarian crises and migration flows caused by violence in many parts of the world, especially the Mediterranean basin.

Open-door policies and a respectful attitude to human suffering and hope are essential to the promotion of mutual trust and should be seen as the basis for peaceful societies and institutions. In that framework, Italy is promoting projects for the protection of cultural heritage in many international forums and on the ground, with the support of other stakeholders, in the firm belief that such initiatives reinforce mutual respect and help overcome intolerance and violent responses to diversity.

The United Nations family's initiatives aimed at preventing conflicts are particularly important when dealing with both extremism and the complex factors conducive to terrorism. In that regard, every element of the Secretary-General's Plan of Action should be considered carefully. We are looking forward to an inclusive and constructive implementation process.

The General Assembly can count on Italy's continued support. We are already a very active partner in joint efforts to combat terrorist activities and violent extremism, targeting crucial areas such as counter-financing and strategic communication.

Mr. Boukadoum (Algeria): I would like to begin by paying tribute to the late former Secretary-General Boutros Boutros-Ghali and to extend our condolences to his family, the United Nations family and the Government of Egypt.

I wish to thank President Lykketoft, for convening this important and timely debate to consider the Secretary-General's Plan of Action to Prevent Violent Extremism (A/70/674). A comprehensive plan of action for preventing violent extremism could provide a coherent response to the increasing threat of violent extremism all over the world. In that regard, my delegation would like to reiterate its deep appreciation to the Secretary-General for his outstanding efforts in the area of counter-terrorism and combating violent extremism. We naturally welcome the Assembly's adoption by consensus of resolution 70/254, on the Plan of Action, and look forward to the next steps.

Algeria would like to reiterate its strong and unequivocal condemnation of all forms of terrorism, regardless of their motivation and wherever, whenever and by whomsoever they are committed. We also reiterate our determination to continue our fight against terrorism and violent extremism. I would like to add a few more comments on the issue.

The struggle against violent extremism and terrorism must also include the rejection of xenophobia and Islamophobia, which are emerging as the new faces of violent extremism. Algeria strongly believes that preventing and combating terrorism and violent extremism requires a high level of vigilance, mobilization and multifaceted cooperation at the national, regional and international levels. Efforts aimed at preventing and countering terrorism and violent extremism cannot be limited exclusively to repressive dimensions but should be deployed upstream and downstream, with a coherent political strategy based on prevention, dialogue and understanding of the attraction that terrorists exert.

My delegation stresses the need to agree on an accurate definition of terrorism. It should be in line with the Charter of the United Nations and international law and should avoid any confusion between acts of terrorism and the legitimate struggles of peoples under colonial or foreign occupation to achieve their inalienable right to self-determination and to peace. We will also continue to warn against all misconceptions and the tendentious association of terrorism with a religion, civilization or geographic area.

I would like to make some comments on the recommendations in the Plan.

With regard to developing national plans of action to prevent violent extremism, I wish to affirm that preventing and combating violent extremism constitutes a priority for my country. I am pleased to be able to announce today that just last week that priority was enshrined in Algeria's Constitution through an amendment introduced for that very purpose. I am equally pleased to announce that Algeria has developed a comprehensive, multidimensional plan of action for deradicalization and the prevention of violent extremism. It was launched on the occasion of our September 2015 celebration of the tenth anniversary of the adoption by referendum of the Charter for Peace and National Reconciliation. That initiative was approved by an overwhelming majority of the Algerian people in response to the call of President Bouteflika to

> "forgive without forgetting, and to look resolutely to the future and reinvent a new way of living together in an Algeria that is increasingly prosperous".

The Algerian strategy for combating violent extremism is based on two main areas. The first is ensuring that all security forces maintain a high level of mobilization and vigilance in the conduct of their mission to protect public order and the safety of the people and their property. The second is implementing a comprehensive deradicalization policy that combines political, economic, social, cultural and religious measures involving all institutions and citizens, mobilizing important national resources.

Regarding regional and international cooperation, Algeria firmly believes that, as with the fight against terrorism, preventing and combating violent extremism and our deradicalization efforts require greater attention and must benefit from sustained bilateral, regional and international cooperation. To mention just one example, in July 2015 Algeria hosted the International Conference on Countering Violent Extremism and on Deradicalization. The Conference offered an opportunity for my country to share its experience with participants, including those directly involved in the fight against extremism.

My country's efforts to combat terrorism have always been aimed at increasing regional and international cooperation, even before the the major events that the world has seen in recent years. From the beginning, Algeria has sought to strengthen efforts to counter terrorism at the African level, and as a result we have seen the emergence of many international legal and other instruments and initiatives that are now playing a very important role in enhancing the effectiveness of African efforts in that regard.

In the Sahel region, the concept of coordination and cooperation is finding its full potential right now. In view of the prevailing situation — which requires both coordination and strengthening the capacities of the countries of the region on the basis of the principle of ownership — Algeria has engaged in a concerted approach through many cooperation mechanisms. To name a few, there is, first, the Working Group of the countries of the field, co-chaired by Algeria and Canada within the Global Counterterrorism Forum; secondly, the Joint Operational General Staff Committee, and thirdly, the Fusion and Liaison Unit, designed mainly for sharing intelligence. There are many other forums that are making a great contribution to facilitating increased security cooperation among the countries concerned.

A comprehensive approach to preventing violent extremism should be based on a comprehensive and objective assessment of the root causes of the phenomenon. We believe that the Plan of Action could be a sound basis for our consideration of the subject. My delegation stands ready to engage constructively in its consideration in all the relevant forums.

Mr. Adamov (Belarus) (*spoke in Russian*): I would like to begin by expressing our condolences to the Government and the people of Egypt and to the family and loved ones of the late former Secretary-General of the United Nations, Boutros Boutros-Ghali.

The Belarusian delegation believes a response to the problem of violent extremism is timely. Both the Secretary-General's report (A/70/674) and resolution 70/254, adopted on Friday, could serve as an important starting point and as the basis of for the intergovernmental negotiation process on the issue.

Some aspects of the report, which have a direct cause-and-effect relationship to the phenomenon of international terrorism, can and should be considered in the context of the upcoming fifth review of the United Nations Global Counter-Terrorism Strategy and will also be taken into consideration by the relevant national bodies. At the same time, we believe that both the existing counter-terrorism mechanisms of the Secretariat and the established intergovernmental processes, particularly the review of the Global Counter-Terrorism Strategy, are capable of adequately covering this subject through their core activities.

In the context of future work on this issue, however, the delegation of Belarus believes it is important to recognize a certain lack of balance in the report, which devotes a significant amount of attention to issues not directly related to violent extremism. To be sure, the rule of law, good governance and the existence of legitimate mechanisms for protecting the interests of minorities can be broadly considered to be factors that reduce the risk of practical manifestations of violent extremism. On the other hand, it must be admitted that these and many other factors cited in the report are very general in nature.

At the same time, issues such as subversion, the dismantling and delegitimization of Government institutions, interference in the internal affairs of States and hostile propaganda are directly related not only to increases in extremist sentiments but also to their escalation into concrete terrorist acts that are not touched on in the report. We hope that this balance will be restored in the course of future inter-State and intergovernmental talks on the issue. Belarus is ready to work constructively with all concerned stakeholders in order to develop and implement thoughtful, collective steps aimed at countering violent extremism.

Mr. Dotta (Uruguay) (*spoke in Spanish*): On behalf of Uruguay, I would like to begin by joining other Member States in offering our sincere condolences to the Government and the people of the Arab Republic of Egypt and the family of former Secretary-General Boutros Boutros-Ghali, who died today.

Uruguay believes that global action against terrorism is today of greatest importance — effective action to prevent it and avoid violent extremism that leads to terrorism. Uruguay reaffirms its commitment to the values, purposes and principles of the multilateral system and firmly condemns violent extremism and terrorism in all their forms, regardless of the perpetrators.

Uruguay is determined to come up with a national strategy for combating terrorism, understanding that today no country or region is immune to its effects, as the Secretary-General stressed in the opening paragraph of his visionary and comprehensive Plan of Action to Prevent Violent Extremism (A/70/674). In the global struggle against violent extremism and terrorism, my country has emphasized in various forums that action at the international level must go beyond the military sphere. It must be based on a comprehensive, long-term approach, involving political and socioeconomic strategies that promote social inclusion, political participation and equality. It should have at its core a strong rule of law and solid institutions that can ensure full enjoyment of human rights, an element essential to achieving the Sustainable Development Goals.

In our view, that approach is reflected in the Secretary-General's Plan of Action. Uruguay commends the Plan's emphasis on the fact that the phenomenon of violent extremism does not arise in a vacuum, and that it is therefore essential to give attention to the structural causes in society that can result in individuals' attraction to groups that foment and practice extremism. In that context, Uruguay shares the view that it is crucial to pay attention to so-called push and pull factors, and that the presentation of the Plan of Action is an important step in the broad approach to the structural causes underlying violent extremism. It also encourages the adoption of non-coercive measures for dealing with them.

Uruguay is grateful to the General Assembly for convening this discussion, in view of the impact and scope of the subject, bearing in mind the Assembly's regulatory and legislative role and its nature as the Organization's most inclusive and democratic body, respectful of the principle of the sovereign equality of States on which it is based. My country believes it is important to emphasize and defend the purview of the General Assembly in the area of the maintenance of international peace and security, without prejudice to the primary responsibility that the Charter of the United Nations confers on the Security Council in that regard. It is of the greatest importance to ensure that the collective work of the entire membership can contribute substantive elements for the development of a comprehensive strategy that will enable us to deal appropriately and effectively with violent extremism. The consensus reached on Friday morning in the adoption of resolution 70/254, on the Plan of Action, is a step in the right direction.

It should be borne in mind that many of the structural causes of violent extremism are directly linked to security issues such as the growing number of armed conflicts, relapses into violence and repression, large-scale violations of human rights and international law and international humanitarian law, recruitment of child soldiers, exploitation of persons, human trafficking and the illegal trade in natural resources, weapons and drugs. Such situations have also produced a gigantic migration crisis that demands urgent solutions for the millions of displaced persons and refugees, whose numbers continue to grow.

It is children who suffer the most, and that compromises the future of our younger generations. For Uruguay, it is therefore imperative that we reclaim and defend their rights, including the right to education, so that every child can have access to quality teaching that respects tolerance and cultural and religious diversity.

Uruguay would like to reiterate that in countering both violent extremism and terrorism, the international community's efforts must respect international law, especially the Charter of the United Nations, the relevant resolutions of the various bodies of the Organization and international human rights and humanitarian law.

Assuming that the discussions on endorsing the Plan of Action are successful, Uruguay would like to have more information, more details on its future implementation, monitoring, coordination in the United Nations system and especially its funding. That is particularly relevant given that its adoption will mean that Member States will develop their own national plans for countering violent extremism.

Mr. Raja Zaib Shah (Malaysia): At the outset, Malaysia associates itself with the statement delivered by the Permanent Representative of Saudi Arabia on behalf of the Organization of Islamic Cooperation (see A/70/PV.84).

We would like to thank the Secretary-General for his Plan of Action to Prevent Violent Extremism (A/70/674). We believe it can provide us with an excellent basis for our deliberations on how Member States can address the issue of preventing violent extremism. We believe that through our discussions it can be built on further. The adoption of resolution 70/254 demonstrates our willingness to deliberate further on the Plan of Action.

While there is no agreed definition of violent extremism, we firmly believe that violent extremism and terrorism must not be associated with any particular country, race, religion, culture or nationality. We are encouraged that the Plan of Action has given due recognition to that. Malaysia condemns all violent acts, methods and practices perpetrated by terrorists and believes that terrorism is a serious global concern that could threaten the stability and security of nations. We acknowledge that there is a need for us to work individually and collectively to prevent violent extremism. We are nevertheless of the view that international cooperation must not in any way undermine national authority or efforts to counter and prevent violent extremism.

We do not justify acts of terror or violent extremism and can never do so. However, when we speak of violent extremism, it is also imperative that we understand what drives it — that is, the factors that cause or contribute to the radicalization of individuals or groups. They may be political, economic or social, or there may be a multiplicity of factors, including prolonged and grievous injustices, unequal access to resources and opportunities, gross violations of human rights, foreign occupation and systematic discrimination.

Since the adoption of Security Council resolution 2178 (2014), Malaysia has taken a number of measures aimed at addressing the threat of terrorism within and outside Malaysia to ensure the safety and security of its people. Those measures include enacting the Prevention of Terrorism Act 2015, a key feature of which is its provisions on rehabilitation and deradicalization. The underlying basis for those provisions is the belief that the fight against terrorism cannot be won through force or punitive measures alone. We are therefore encouraged that more attention and recognition are being given to preventive measures, particularly pillars I and IV of the United Nations Global Counter-Terrorism Strategy, which relate to tackling the conditions conducive to the spread of terrorism and ensuring respect for human rights for all and for the rule of law while countering terrorism.

Malaysia believes that we need a multifaceted approach to addressing the root causes and underlying contributory factors that support extremism and terrorism. We believe that winning people's hearts and minds, especially those of the younger generation, is just as important as the security and intelligence elements in our common endeavour to counter such threats. The impact of the soft approach should not be underestimated.

We are concerned about the increase of intolerance of Muslims and discrimination against them, which has resulted in an upsurge of Islamophobia, a phenomenon that is an affront to Muslims' human rights and dignity. In that regard, Malaysia stands ready to share its experience of marginalizing extremism, maintaining a multireligious country in which different faiths coexist and prosper and showing that Islam can not only succeed but can drive progress and development in a pluralistic society.

In an effort to counter the threat that terrorism poses through the electronic media, particularly social media, Malaysia has initiated a regional digital counter-messaging communications centre. Its objectives are twofold: first, contesting the terrorist rhetoric and agenda in the region within the digital space by exposing their misinformation and disinformation, and secondly, producing counter-narratives aimed at winning the hearts and minds of the people.

On 2 October 2015, Malaysia hosted in Kuala Lumpur a special ministerial meeting of the Association of Southeast Asian Nations (ASEAN) on the rise of radicalization and violent extremism. The meeting resolved, among other things, to call on ASEAN member States to speak up against and reject extremism and to support moderation, in line with the Langkawi Declaration on the Global Movement of Moderates adopted by ASEAN on 27 April 2015. The Langkawi Declaration aims to promote moderation and tolerance as core values for the region and its peoples in order to ensure that the region continues to be peaceful and prosperous. Only last month, Malaysia also hosted an international conference on deradicalization and countering extreme violence.

We believe that this is where our collective efforts could play an invaluable and important role in countering and preventing violent extremism. In that regard, Malaysia welcomes the cooperation and collaboration between the Global Movement of Moderates and the United Nations Alliance of Civilizations with the goal of developing concrete and pragmatic programmes to further promote global peace and understanding. Malaysia joins all stakeholders and Member States to build on existing synergies in exploring new proposals and suggestions that could create and promote awareness of the value of moderation in addressing current global challenges, particularly in relation to our shared goal of eradicating violent extremism around the world.

We look forward to listening to the views of other delegations and engaging constructively with them on the Plan of Action at the upcoming Geneva conference and in the review of the United Nations Global Counter-Terrorism Strategy, to be held later this year.

Mr. Doucouré (Mali) (*spoke in French*): The delegation of Mali commends the initiative of today's debate on the Plan of Action to Prevent Violent Extremism (A/70/674) proposed by the Secretary-General. We welcome the consensus that prevailed in the Assembly's adoption on Friday of resolution 70/254, and we note that the Plan of Action is an important step within the framework of the review of the United Nations Global Counter-Terrorism Strategy scheduled for June. The resolution's adoption is a clear demonstration of the unshakeable willingness of the Members of our Organization to work together to combat a phenomenon as complex and dangerous as violent extremism.

The Malian delegation associates itself with the statement delivered by the representative of the Kingdom of Saudi Arabia on behalf of the member

States of the Organization of Islamic Cooperation (see A/70/PV.84). I would also like to make a few comments.

It is no secret today that the spread of terrorism and violent extremism is a major threat to international peace and security. The resurgence of indiscriminate violence throughout world, including in the Sahel region, and the complexity of attacks and their levels of planning, coordination and sophistication are abundant proof that we have no choice but to bring together our efforts and intelligence to neutralize the Hydra of terrorism and its tentacles, namely, the Islamic State in Iraq and the Levant, Al-Qaida in the Islamic Maghreb, Boko Haram, Al-Shabaab, Ansar Eddine, the Mouvement pour l'unicité et le jihad en Afrique de l'Ouest, Al-Morabitoun and so forth.

My country, Mali, was a victim of a terrorist and narco-jihadi attack in 2012, and unfortunately it continues to pay a heavy price for terrorism and violent extremism. That leads me to point out that violent extremism leading to terrorism is completely foreign to Malian society, which is known for its openness and tolerance and for practicing a peaceful and moderate form of Islam.

In Mali, the authorities have understood the scale of the challenge of preventing violent extremism. Indeed, the Government of Mali has launched, with the support of the Kingdom of Morocco, a programme to train Malian imams to strengthen their resilience so as to preserve the authentic values of Islam that have been taught at the universities of Timbuktu and practiced in the Sahel region for centuries. That beneficial initiative, which extends to other countries in the subregion, will enable the values of Islam — the values of peace and tolerance — to be disseminated.

The other approach of the Government of Mali lies in the fight against the recruitment of young people into terrorist and extremist networks. That approach emphasizes the virtues of dialogue and mutual understanding and discredits an ideology of hatred, intolerance and the rejection of difference.

In addition to those actions at the national level, there are other initiatives at the regional level involving neighbouring States and partners of Mali, such as the United Nations Integrated Strategy for the Sahel, whose quick implementation should also help effectively combat the causes of violent extremism. I would like to strongly stress that the Government of Mali condemns terrorism and violent extremism and remains determined to fight the causes and manifestations of those scourges.

Finally, I add my voice to that of the Under-Secretary-General for Political Affairs when he spoke to honour the memory of all victims of terrorism and violent extremism, including the Blue Helmets in peacekeeping operations, such as the United Nations Multidimensional Integrated Stabilization Mission in Mali (MINUSMA), which, we should remember, was plunged into mourning on Friday by a terrorist attack on the contingent of the Republic of Guinea, in Kidal. That is the umpteenth attack against MINUSMA. It underscores the need to integrate the prevention of violent fundamentalism in the mandates of peacekeeping operations, as reflected in the Plan of Action, but also to equip and enable peacekeepers to defend themselves by adapting the mandate of the missions to the terrorist environment in which they are deployed.

The Acting President: In accordance with General Assembly resolution 2011 (XX) of 11 October 1965 and decision 56/475 of 15 August 2002, I call on the observer of the African Union.

Mr. António (African Union): Allow me first to express our sadness at the demise of His Excellency Mr. Boutros Boutros-Ghali, former Secretary-General and the first African to lead the United Nations, and to express our deepest condolences to the people and Government of Egypt, to his family and certainly to the entire United Nations family.

I wish to thank the President for convening these important plenary meetings and congratulate him and all members of the Office of the President of the General Assembly on the successful consultations he has conducted during the recent weeks to determine how best to take forward the Secretary-General's very important Plan of Action to Prevent Violent Extremism (A/70/674).

The consensual adoption of resolution 70/254, on the Secretary-General's Plan of Action, conveys a strong message of the unity of the international community in the face of terrorism and violent extremism. It is a testimony to the whole membership's commitment to a new global partnership to confront this grave threat, which undermines not only international peace and security but also the very values and principles that have long characterized our diverse and democratic societies. I cannot fail to commend the tireless efforts of Secretary-General Ban Ki-Moon in advancing this issue. I wish to seize this opportunity to express our strong support for his comprehensive Plan of Action.

We believe that the Secretary-General's Plan can provide a comprehensive framework to inform our collective efforts at the national, regional and international levels. We are particularly pleased that the Plan puts a special emphasis on prevention and presents concrete recommendations to tackle the root causes of violent extremism. Indeed, effective prevention of terrorism and violent extremism requires addressing the underlying causes. By doing so, the Plan translates a growing international consensus on the critical importance of developing a comprehensive and pragmatic approach that not only covers security aspects but also addresses the structural dimensions and factors underlying radicalization and violent extremism.

Security-focused counter-terrorism intervention may seem effective in the short term. However, it has proven unsustainable and ineffective in the long term, often counterproductive and resulting in a larger pool of individuals vulnerable to radicalization. Considerable emphasis must therefore be placed on good governance, particularly the promotion of accountable, transparent and inclusive governance systems based on the rule of law, as well as on addressing poverty, unemployment and inequality. In addition, efforts should also be focused on social and community cohesion, education and a culture of dialogue.

In Africa, terrorism and violent extremism still represent the most serious threat to peace and security. Despite the sustained efforts deployed and the progress made in preventing and combating terrorism and violent extremism, the phenomenon continues to expand geographically and brazenly displays unprecedented levels of violence in various parts of the continent. The African Union (AU) remains actively engaged in the fight against this scourge. The relevant AU policy organs have articulated a comprehensive framework for the implementation of the AU and international counter-terrorism instruments in Africa. The AU has also undertaken numerous capacity-building initiatives to enhance the capacity of its member States to combat terrorism.

The commitment of the African Union to combating terrorism and violent extremism was further demonstrated during the Summit of the African Union Peace and Security Council, held on 29 January, which, among other things, discussed and reviewed AU efforts against terrorism. The Summit reaffirmed the continued relevance of the instruments adopted by the Organization of African Unity/African Union over the years and called for renewed efforts to combat extremism and radical religious interpretations that foster intolerance and violence.

The Summit also agreed to pursue and intensify efforts to support the establishment of regional cooperation mechanisms to address specific transnational threats in different regions of the continent. In that regard, it is worth recalling that a number of security cooperation mechanisms have already been established to encourage better coordination and exchange of information among member States, notably within the frameworks of the Nouakchott Process, the Sahel Fusion and Liaison Unit, the Djibouti Process for Eastern Africa and the Eastern Africa Fusion and Liaison Unit.

Furthermore, mindful of the fact that countering terrorism without addressing the drivers of violent extremism is likely to be counterproductive, the AU Commission continues to work closely with members States towards developing sound national policies and programmes to counter radicalization, delegitimize the terrorist's narratives vis-à-vis the youth, build young people's resilience against violent extremism and renew their confidence in their Governments' ability to respond to their needs.

It is in that context that a number of measures have been initiated by the AU Commission. Those include developing and implementing programmes to counter radicalization and violent extremism in prisons and detention facilities; facilitating open discussions between State authorities and civil society, including religious authorities and women's organizations, in order to allow communities to air their grievances and contribute actively to efforts to counter extremist ideologies; engaging the media in countering terrorist narratives and delegitimizing violent ideologies; providing a platform for victims of terrorist acts to contribute to the overall efforts to counter terrorism and violent extremism; and encouraging member States to ensure the successful implementation of their economic development and poverty alleviation policies and programmes.

In conclusion, allow me to reiterate the African Union's commitment to fully shouldering its share of responsibility in the fight against terrorism and violent extremism. We should also be mindful of the fact that conditions that provide fertile ground for terrorism and violent extremism have to be addressed globally.

The Acting President: We have heard the last speaker on these items. The Assembly has thus concluded this stage of its consideration of agenda items 16 and 117.

The meeting rose at 5.05 p.m.

United Nations A/70/PV.87

General Assembly

Seventieth session

Official Records

87th plenary meeting
Thursday, 18 February 2016, 11 a.m.
New York

President: Mr. Lykketoft .... (Denmark)

In the absence of the President, Ms. Moses (Nauru), Vice-President, took the Chair.

The meeting was called to order at 11.05 a.m.

Tribute to the memory of His Excellency Mr. Boutros Boutros-Ghali, sixth Secretary-General of the United Nations

The Acting President: It is our sad duty to pay tribute to the memory of His Excellency Mr. Boutros Boutros-Ghali, sixth Secretary-General of the United Nations, who passed away on 16 February.

I have the honour to deliver this statement on behalf of the President of the General Assembly, Mr. Mogens Lykketoft, who is travelling on official business at this time. I also wish to acknowledge the presence among us today of Mr. Thabo Mbeki, former President of the Republic of South Africa.

This morning we gather together to mark the passing of the sixth Secretary-General, Mr. Boutros Boutros-Ghali. As the organ that ultimately appoints the Secretary-General, it is fitting that the General Assembly pay its respects to the man who led the Organization from 1992 to 1996.

Mr. Boutros-Ghali was a first for the United Nations — our first African, and indeed our first Arab Secretary-General. He held office during a period of great change and incredible challenges. Taking over so soon after the fall of the Berlin Wall, Mr. Boutros-Ghali worked tirelessly to reform this large and at times unwieldy Organization and to manage the United Nations response to appalling crises in Europe, Africa and beyond.

Outcomes from major conferences during his tenure in Rio, Vienna, Beijing and Cairo, together with his Agenda for Peace and his Agenda for Development, can now be seen very clearly at the heart of the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development (resolution 70/1). His period at the helm demonstrates ever so clearly that the position of Secretary-General is indeed one of the most difficult jobs in the world.

On behalf of this entire Assembly, I would like to extend my most sincere condolences to the family and friends of Mr. Boutros-Ghali who mourn his passing today. I extend also my sympathies to the people and the Government of Egypt, who have lost one of their greatest sons and statesmen.

I would ask the members of the General Assembly rise to observe a minute of silence in memory of Boutros Boutros-Ghali.

The members of the General Assembly observed a minute of silence.

The Acting President: I now give the floor to the Secretary-General, His Excellency Mr. Ban Ki-moon.

The Secretary-General (*spoke in French*): I thank the General Assembly for having decided to pay tribute to my eminent predecessor, Boutros Boutros-Ghali. I offer my sincere condolences to his widow, Mrs. Laila Boutros-Ghali, the other members of the Boutros-Ghali family, the Egyptian people and all those who deplore this loss.

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(*spoke in English*)

Boutros Boutros-Ghali had both the fortune and misfortune to serve as the first post-Cold War Secretary-General of the United Nations. While the United Nations was never as paralysed during the Cold War as many have portrayed, the new dynamic gave the Organization new leeway to act. That brought promise and peril — and Mr. Boutros-Ghali experienced both.

In his very first month in office, Mr. Boutros-Ghali presided over the first-ever summit meeting of the Security Council — a powerful symbol of the will of world leaders to make greater use of the United Nations. "As the new era begins", Mr. Boutros-Ghali told the assembled leaders, "it calls for both ideas and action to place international life on stronger foundations" (*S/PV.3046, p. 8*).

Mr. Boutros-Ghali was a fount of ideas, building on his long career as a professor of international law. He broke barriers as the first African and Arab Secretary-General of the United Nations and consistently gave voice to the poorest and least powerful members of the human family. He steered the Organization through a series of world conferences on the environment, population, human rights, women's rights, social development and the unique challenges faced by the world's small island developing States. Those global gatherings captured the imagination and gave the world exciting new policies, directions and purpose. The 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development (resolution 70/1), which is our inspiring new template today, owes much to the pioneering intellectual work of the 1990s.

Mr. Boutros-Ghali also oversaw remarkable growth in peacekeeping. His Agenda for Peace report (A/47/277) made far-reaching proposals for fortifying that flagship United Nations activity, many of which have since become standard practice, but also many of which remain unfulfilled. During his time in office, peacekeeping helped Cambodia, El Salvador, Mozambique and other countries emerge from conflict. At the same time, engagements in the Balkans, Somalia and Rwanda highlighted the gap between the needs of a given situation and the material support and political unity required from Member States, in particular the Security Council. There, too, the echoes resound and, indeed, haunt us to this very day.

Mr. Boutros Boutros-Ghali pursued major restructuring efforts, managerial reforms and other steps that strengthened the United Nations. In his report entitled "An Agenda for Democratization" (A/51/761), he broke new ground in emphasizing the links among peace, development and democracy at the national level and in his calls for the democratization of the international system.

Mr. Boutros-Ghali won respect near and far, including as a leading Egyptian diplomat before joining the United Nations and, afterwards, as Secretary General of the International Organization of la Francophonie. Yet he never attempted to endear himself to everybody. Perhaps he was too direct for some; he might have been too professorial for others; some definitely found him too independent — a goal that he considered among the highest virtues for any Secretary-General of the United Nations.

I thank my predecessor for his lasting contributions to our work and I invite all representatives to share their thoughts and tributes in a book of condolences, which has been placed near the Meditation Room just outside this Hall. At a tumultuous time, Boutros Boutros-Ghali helped the United Nations find its footing in a new global landscape. As we do the same today, let us continue to build on his legacy. May he rest in peace.

The Acting President: I now give the floor to the representative of Swaziland, who will speak on behalf of the Group of African States.

Mr. Mnisi (Swaziland): The Group of African States is saddened by the passing of His Excellency Mr. Boutros Boutros-Ghali, an illustrious son of Africa and erudite diplomat. His ascendency to the helm of our global Organization as the first Secretary-General from the African continent was a great source of pride for us in Africa. We extend our heartfelt condolences to the family of the late Boutros Boutros-Ghali, as well as to the Government and people of Egypt for their loss.

As the sixth Secretary-General, Boutros Boutros-Ghali led the Organization during a very challenging period in a post-Cold War era as fundamental changes shaped geopolitical order. Though daunting were his tasks in steering the Organization and, against the backdrop of myriad of violent conflicts erupting around the world, including in Africa, Secretary-General Boutros Boutros-Ghali rose to the challenge and provided a vision for making the United Nations more efficient in addressing the challenging context of global insecurity. His landmark report "An Agenda for Peace" (A/47/277) continues to be the lodestar for the United Nations doctrine for preventive diplomacy, peacemaking and peacekeeping. In the Agenda for Peace, the late Boutros Boutros-Ghali also provided his manifesto for fostering partnership between the United Nations and regional organizations in the context of Chapter VIII of the Charter of the United Nations.

As we collectively construct the new peacebuilding architecture and also translate into reality the recommendations emanating from the report of the High-level Independent Panel on Peace Operations (see S/2015/446), invariably, we are building on the legacies of Boutros Boutros-Ghali.

The timing of his death, as the United Nations celebrates its seventieth anniversary, impels us to pay tribute to his sterling leadership of the milestone commemoration of the fiftieth anniversary of the United Nations and the adoption of the historic declaration (resolution 50/6) by world leaders. His statement delivered during the special commemorative meeting of the General Assembly to mark the fiftieth anniversary of the United Nations, held on 22 October 1995, foretold the problems we are today confronting as humankind.

> "The world of the twenty-first century will confront two great opposing forces: globalization and fragmentation. A new dialectic has already begun ... Globalization will generate a number of problems. Financial flows of vast magnitude sweep across the world. Alarming environmental events will expose the planet to permanent damage. Transnational crime will grow. The global communications revolution will generate pressures which our national institutions were not designed to address." (*A/50/PV.35, p. 2*)

May his soul rest in perfect peace.

The Acting President: I now give the floor to the representative of India, who will speak on behalf of the Group of Asia-Pacific States.

Mr. Akbaruddin (India): I have the honour to speak on behalf of the Member States of the Asia-Pacific Group.

We are deeply saddened by the demise of the sixth Secretary-General, Mr. Boutros Boutros-Ghali. Mr. Boutros-Ghali was the first Arab and African to be the Secretary-General. He presided over the United Nations during the historic moments in the immediate aftermath of the Cold War period when the United Nations was looked to for solutions to global problems.

The late Secretary-General brought to the United Nations the wealth of experience he had gained during his successful stints as Minister of State for Foreign Affairs and, subsequently, Deputy Prime Minister for Foreign Affairs of Egypt. Mr. Boutrous-Ghali showed no hesitation in posing tough questions to Member States, and his aspiration was for the United Nations to be a truly democratic body. His landmark report, "An Agenda for Peace: preventive diplomacy, peacemaking and peacekeeping" (A/47/277), submitted within six months of the start of his tenure as the Secretary-General, indicated that he meant serious business at the United Nations. The report was an apt response to shape the Organization's approach to the beginning of a new era.

During the late Secretary-General's tenure, there was a remarkable rise in United Nations peacekeeping. He rendered invaluable services for international peace and security. We also note that Mr. Boutros-Ghali made strenuous efforts to strengthen the United Nations system as a whole. Mr. Boutros-Ghali continued to remain engaged with intellectual and diplomatic activities even after he left the United Nations, taking up such positions as the first Secretary General of the International Organization of la Francophonie, and Director of the Egyptian National Council for Human Rights, a position which Mr. Boutros-Ghali occupied until as recently as 2012.

Mr. Boutros-Ghali's passing represents a great loss to humanity, and he has left a vacuum that will be difficult to fill. We extend our deepest condolences to Mrs. Boutros-Ghali, as well as to the rest of the family, the Egyptian people, and to the late Secretary-General's many friends and admirers in the United Nations and around the world.

The Acting President: I now call on the representative of Armenia, who will speak on behalf of the Group of Eastern European States.

Mr. Mnatsakanyan (Armenia): The members of the Group of Eastern European States join their voice to the expressions of sorrow at the passing of Mr. Boutros Boutros-Ghali, former Secretary-General of the United Nations. The legacy of Mr. Boutros-Ghali is truly impressive. It is a source of deep reflection on the evolution of the Organization over the past 25 years. He led the global Organization in the aftermath of the Cold War, when aspirations and hopes for a better and safer world were considerable, in particular among the nations of our Group. However, his term bore witness to many devastating and harrowing conflicts and massive tragedies, such as those in Somalia, Rwanda and Bosnia and Herzegovina. The Organization, its staff and the Secretary-General were stretched to considerable limits.

Our current agenda and the collective effort to reinforce the role of the Organization continue to refer to the legacy of Mr. Boutros-Ghali. The landmark work, entitled "An Agenda for Peace: preventive diplomacy, peacemaking and peacekeeping" (A/47/277), remains a reference on which various initiatives of subsequent years were based. His term witnessed a significant rise in peacekeeping and the birth of the concept of post-conflict peacebuilding, which continues to shape our present thinking and efforts with regard to advancing that fundamental function of the Organization.

An accomplished diplomat and a distinguished lawyer, Mr. Boutros-Ghali made a remarkable contribution to his own country, Egypt. As Minister of State for Foreign Affairs of Egypt, he played a critical role in advancing regional peace negotiations. For many students, scholars and practitioners of international relations, this phase in history remains a source of study, research and reflection. Not least, as former head of the International Organization of la Francophonie, Mr. Boutros-Ghali leaves behind a valuable legacy for the global community of French-speaking peoples.

The advance of our collective agenda for peace in the present times remains, as ever, a challenge and an ongoing saga. The remarkable legacy of Mr. Boutros-Ghali is one of perseverance and commitment to service for his people and for the world, and it receives our collective admiration and respect. The members of the Group of Eastern European States express their deepest condolences to Mrs. Boutros-Ghali, to Mr. Boutros-Ghali's family and friends, and to the people and Government of Egypt. Their loss and grief are shared by the whole of the United Nations, its staff, and all Member States.

The Acting President: I now call on the representative of Uruguay, who will speak on behalf of the Group of Latin American and Caribbean States.

Ms. Carrión (Uruguay) (*spoke in Spanish*): On behalf of the Group of Latin American and Caribbean States, I would like to express our deep condolences on the passing of Mr. Boutros Boutros-Ghali, former Secretary-General of the United Nations. Mr. Boutros-Ghali, the first African and the first Arab to hold that position, led the United Nations during one of the most difficult times in the history of the Organization. He began his term with optimism and hope, impassioned by the end of the Cold War. He faced challenges of great magnitude with the spread of crises and horrors the world thought overcome. Evaluating the legacy of a man is always difficult and risky, especially when the historical circumstances under which he had to act were extremely complex.

Convinced that Mr. Boutros-Ghali put his solid academic training and vast political and diplomatic experience to the service of the Organization, the Latin American and Caribbean Group would like to pay him tribute today. Genuinely concerned about the consequences of war, Mr. Boutros-Ghali emphasized the importance of post-conflict peacebuilding in his historic report, entitled "An Agenda for Peace: preventive diplomacy, peacemaking and peacekeeping" (A/47/277), which continues to embody the philosophy of the United Nations and inspire its actions.

The Latin American and Caribbean Group would like to convey to the family of Mr. Boutros-Ghali, and to the Government and people of Egypt, our sincere condolences.

The Acting President: I now call on the representative of Liechtenstein, who will speak on behalf of the Group of Western European and other States.

Mr. Wenaweser (Liechtenstein): I have the honour to speak today on behalf of the Group of Western European and other States. We are deeply saddened by the death of former Secretary-General Boutros Boutros-Ghali. We offer our heartfelt condolences to the Secretariat of the United Nations, the people of Egypt and — above all — to his family and friends.

As the sixth of only eight persons to hold what one of his predecessors described as "the most impossible job in the world", Mr. Boutros-Ghali left an indelible legacy that continues to affect our work here at the United Nations until this day. His landmark report, entitled "An Agenda for Peace: preventive diplomacy, peacemaking and peacekeeping" (A/47/277), for example, has shaped the way in which the United Nations addresses conflicts by introducing the concept of post-conflict peacebuilding.

Boutros Boutros-Ghali's term in office was marked by a resurgence of multilateralism after the end of the Cold War and an unprecedented demand for the Organization's services in peacemaking, peacekeeping and peacebuilding. Mr. Boutros-Ghali did much to shape the United Nations response to these demands. To quote Secretary-General Ban Ki-moon,

> "he showed courage in posing difficult questions to the Member States, and rightly insisted on the independence of his office and of the Secretariat as a whole"(*SG/SM/17544*).

His legacy was not limited to the United Nations, however. His years at the United Nations were preceded by long years of service in the Government of Egypt, culminating in his holding the post of Deputy Prime Minister and Foreign Minister. Boutros Boutros-Ghali also contributed in many respects to the enrichment of international law, as a highly recognized faculty member, a member of the International Law Commission and a member of the International Commission of Jurists, to name a few of his past affiliations.

He also embodied the dialogue among nations, languages and civilizations that the United Nations was built for. After his term as Secretary-General, he continued to be active, most notably as the first Secretary General of the International Organization of the Francophonie and contributed to the Francophonie's flourishing cooperation with the United Nations.

The United Nations has lost a leader, a friend, an advocate. He will be mourned the world over.

The Acting President: I now give the floor to the representative of the United States, who will speak on behalf of the host country.

Ms. Power (United States of America): I would like to begin by extending the sympathies of the United States to former Secretary-General Boutros-Ghali's family, to his friends, to his wife Laila, to his former colleagues throughout the United Nations family and to the Egyptian people.

My predecessor, Madeleine Albright, once described Boutros Boutros-Ghali as "impressive, blessed with brains, confidence, and style". As today's tributes attest, the Secretary-General was indeed a man of exceptional intellect, talent and conviction. He was an admired academic, publishing a dozen books; a successful peacemaker, helping to negotiate the Camp David Accords in 1978; and a very effective negotiator, quietly helping to secure Nelson Mandela's release from prison and facilitating subsequent talks between Mandela and the apartheid Government. After one conversation with Boutros-Ghali back in 1992, Nelson Mandela told a reporter, "I leave the meeting with a feeling of strength and hope."

Boutros Boutros-Ghali was a man possessed of many gifts — gifts that enabled him to be deliberate even in his use of language. He once told a reporter that "When I have tense relations with my wife, we speak in Arabic. When we talk business, then we speak English. When our relationship is better, then we talk French." If Arabic was his preferred language when times were tense, I am sure he sometimes wished he could speak that language with my Government. The United States and the Secretary-General had our disagreements back in the day, but the United States recognizes the great debt owed to Boutros-Ghali for his lifetime of service, and we will be forever grateful for the impact he had on this institution.

Boutros Boutros-Ghali assumed the helm of the United Nations in the uncertain days following the end of the Cold War. At a time when some wondered if the United Nations would remain relevant beyond its fiftieth birthday, he was determined to shepherd it into the new era. He set out to streamline and strengthen the Secretariat, consolidating disparate offices, abolishing senior positions he judged unnecessary and recruiting high-calibre personnel to build a modernized international civil service. The latter was not always an easy task, he once observed, because "to work here you have to be cuckoo like me".

Boutros-Ghali tried to improve the way the United Nations was managed. He ordered that all the United Nations offices in any given city be consolidated at one location for greater effectiveness and efficiency. On a trip to Accra, he was horrified to discover that while all the United Nations offices had indeed been relocated to one place, a wall nonetheless separated the different agencies, with each still relying on its own administrative team. Outraged, he ordered the wall be torn down at once.

His report "An Agenda for Peace" (A/47/277), unveiled the year he took office, introduced an ambitious reform plan that, as one newspaper editorial said at the time, "breathed new life into the United Nations". Through efforts like this, he paved the way for improved United Nations diplomacy, peacemaking and peacekeeping, which are among our most important functions to this day. Advancing such an ambitious agenda was never easy, but Boutros-Ghali foresaw as much. As he settled into his new office early in his tenure, he later recalled,

> "I soon discovered with delight that some tiny birds were conducting their affairs outside my windows, apparently trying to nest there. They were house finches, I was told. I marvelled at how such small creatures could function in the strong winds above the ground. I wondered whether I could do so as well."

The answer, we now know, is that he could and that, indeed, he did. In spite of the winds, he managed to lay the foundations for the United Nations we have today. And in doing so, he made a profound and lasting contribution to the pursuit of global peace and prosperity, the cause to which he dedicated his remarkable life. As we mourn his loss, we honour his legacy by redoubling our efforts to strengthen and improve this Organization so that it may grow ever closer toward realizing the potential that he saw in it.

The Acting President: I now give the floor to the representative of Lebanon, who will speak on behalf of the Group of Arab States.

Mr. Salam (Lebanon) (*spoke in Arabic*): I have the honour to speak today on behalf of the Group of Arab States. In losing Boutros Boutros-Ghali, we have lost a great man who contributed to the Arab world and the world at large.

Mr. Boutros Boutros-Ghali held various posts in Egypt, including Minister of State for Foreign Affairs from 1977 to 1991. He was the Head of Government when he was elected Secretary-General. He was the first Arab to hold this post, which he did from 1992 to 1996. He brought to the post his vast experience and professional skill. He was known for his devotion for the Charter of the United Nations and international law. He was a cultivated man and did not let the difficulties that the international community was facing at the end of the Cold War, when he started his mandate, keep him from taking initiatives whose impact is still felt today.

A number of speakers today have referred to Mr. Boutros-Ghali's report "An Agenda for Peace" (A/47/277), his landmark vision for the role of the United Nations in preventive diplomacy and peacekeeping, which seeks to prevent crises rather simply manage them. Who among us would not want to affirm the importance of allocating sufficient resources for peacekeeping operations? Who among us would not want to preserve the independence of the post of Secretary-General and of the Secretariat as each works to fulfil its mandate?

Finally, I wish to convey my sincerest condolences to the family of Mr. Boutros-Ghali, to the Government and the people of Egypt, to the United Nations and all those worldwide who believe in the importance of diplomacy and who knew this great man and were alongside him as he occupied his various posts.

The Acting President: I now give the floor to the representative of Egypt.

Mr. Aboulatta (Egypt) (*spoke in Arabic*): At the outset, I wish to express the gratitude of the Government and people of Egypt for this special meeting to pay tribute to Boutros Boutros-Ghali. His passing is a huge loss for Egypt and the United Nations family, and I thank today's speakers for the sincerity of their feelings and emotion. This meeting clearly illustrates the United Nations attachment to and recognition of Mr. Boutros Boutros-Ghali and the role he played here. He was the elder statesman of Egyptian diplomacy and one of its pillars for over 50 years. His political, diplomatic and legal legacy continues to guide us today.

This United Nations tribute provides an example of how one should pay tribute to such outstanding individuals as Boutros Boutros-Ghali. He gave generously to his country, Africa and the Arab world. He set an example for future generations. He clearly expressed his strong connection to his country, which is one of diverse intellectual, cultural and religious traditions. He was an ardent defender of the rights of the Arab region, and he also fought for Africa. He was proud of his connection to the African continent and fought for the rights of African peoples to freedom and prosperity. He was also an influential politician on the international scene who championed the principles of peace, justice and brotherhood, communication, tolerance and cultural exchange between countries. More than anything, I feel pride at the expressions of condolences, in spite of my sorrow and the fact that his wisdom will be sorely missed during this difficult period and its unprecedented challenges.

Mr. Boutros-Ghali dedicated his life to the cause of peace. He greatly valued human rights and feared no one. He was fiercely independent, and his adversaries — even more than his friends — testify to how hard he worked during his term in order to consolidate the independence of the Office of the Secretary-General. He paid dearly for that independence, of course, but it remains an example nevertheless. He acted with great professionalism, great realism and the righteousness of a legal scholar attached to the rule of law.

We all knew him as a brilliant scholar, skilful diplomat and influential politician. We knew him as the leader of the International Organization of la Francophonie. He was the first Arab and African to hold the post of Secretary-General during the difficult period that followed the end of the Cold War, as conflicts raged in Somalia, Angola and the former Yugoslavia. During those difficult years, he solidified the United Nations approach in the areas of peacekeeping, peacebuilding and preventive diplomacy. The concepts he developed then remain relevant and in use today, whenever the necessary political will is there.

I would like to conclude with a few words from a 2006 interview that, in my view, reflect the depth of his thought:

> "Cultural pluralism is as important as and multi-party pluralism. Religious, linguistic and cultural pluralism are vitally important hallmarks of a true democracy. We are against cultural hegemony of any sort. Diversity is a mark of a healthy democracy."

I would also like to express my sincerest condolences to the widow of Boutros-Ghali, his acolytes and the Egyptian people.

The Acting President: In accordance with General Assembly resolution 33/18 of 10 November 1978 and decision 53/453 of 18 December 1998, I now call on the observer for the International Organization of la Francophonie.

Mr. Tiendrebeogo (International Organization of la Francophonie) (*spoke in French*): I have the honour, on behalf of the International Organization of la Francophonie, to join in the heartfelt tribute to Mr. Boutros Boutros-Ghali today.

I would like to use this opportunity to echo the words of the Secretary General of the International Organization of la Francophonie, Michaëlle Jean, who expressed her great and profound sadness upon hearing of the death of Mr. Boutros-Ghali, former Secretary-General of the United Nations and first Secretary General of the International Organization of la Francophonie. At the head of the International Organization of la Francophonie from 1998 to 2002, Mr. Boutros Boutros-Ghali gave the organization its full political dimension — a major change that was decided upon during the Summit of Heads of State and Government held in Hanoi in November 1997.

The International Organization of la Francophonie pays tribute to a man who worked tirelessly for world peace, democracy, rights and freedoms. We can never say enough about the tireless efforts he made throughout his academic, political and diplomatic career for the recognition, respect and advancement of those universal values. As an alternative globalist, he had a modern and fair-minded vision of the development of the countries of the South. As an activist for peace, he bequeathed to us the historic report entitled "An Agenda for Peace: preventive diplomacy, peacemaking and peacekeeping" (A/47/277), a milestone of the action undertaken by the international community, in particular the United Nations, to consolidate, maintain and re-establish peace.

A visionary, Boutros Boutros-Ghali was also the first to bring the International Organization of la Francophonie to the forefront of international diplomacy. Also a trailblazer, he used these words to define the future of our organization: "La Francophonie will be subversive and imaginative or it will not be." Today, the French-speaking family mourns the loss of a great activist for the organization and a father for institutional and political Francophonie that includes all stakeholders, young people, women, civil society. The International Organization of la Francophonie offers its deepest condolences to the family of Mr. Boutros Boutros-Ghali, the Egyptian people and the United Nations family. May the soul of this illustrious man rest in peace.

The meeting rose at 11.50 a.m.